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JOHN FORD'S CAVALRY TRILOGY: MYTH OR REALITY?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
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fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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B.S., United States Air Force Academy, 1975

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## 19. ABSTRACT

The study analyzes John Ford's films Fort Apache (1948), She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949), and Rio Grande (1950) for their historical portrayal of the frontier cavalry. Ford is acknowledged as one of America's foremost chroniclers and myth-makers. His films comprise a significant body of film and cultural history, reflect his values and attitudes, and offer conflicts between historical accuracy and cinematic considerations. The analysis begins by examining the personal and business influences shaping Ford's work. The study then examines each film for historical accuracy in the areas of people, places, and events; uniforms, equipment, and accouterments; the profession and garrison life; and finally, the American Indian and military operations.

The later appellation of "trilogy" for Ford's three films is appropriate for several reasons. Each film offers the same subject, similar character types with the same names, recurring musical themes, and the same actors. Lastly, the films were made in consecutive years. In Fort Apache, a glory-seeking regimental commander leads his men to overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Apache Indians. She Wore a Yellow Ribbon treats the last days of a seasoned captain's career during the aftermath of the Custer debacle. In Rio Grande, the cavalry conducts an unofficially sanctioned punitive expedition into Mexico against renegade Apaches.

With notable exceptions, Ford accurately portrays the frontier cavalry of the 1870s. As mythmaker, he embellishes the image of the West using Monument Valley and strengthens the Custer legend throughout the trilogy. The films suffer from significant discrepancies in uniforms, equipment, and accouterments, but these are more than offset by other factors. Ford's depiction of the profession and garrison life are his greatest achievements; he accentuates the feel and mood of the films with authentic music. Although he generally does not depict actual events, Ford's action parallels historical occurrences and adds to the credibility of the pictures. Finally, his portrayal of the Indian-fighting army only adds to the judgment he is more chronicler than mythmaker.

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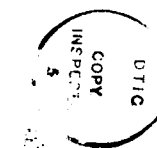
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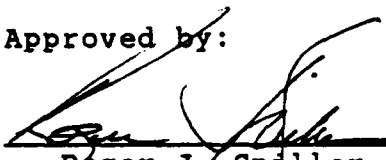
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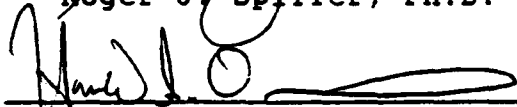
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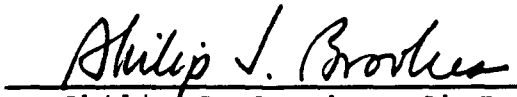
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

JOHN FORD'S CAVALRY TRILOGY: MYTH OR REALITY? by Major Jeffrey C. Prater, USAF, 167 pages.

The study analyzes John Ford's films Fort Apache (1948), She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949), and Rio Grande (1950) for their historical portrayal of the frontier cavalry. Ford is acknowledged as one of America's foremost chroniclers and myth-makers. His films comprise a significant body of film and cultural history, reflect his values and attitudes, and offer conflicts between historical accuracy and cinematic considerations. The analysis begins by examining the personal and business influences shaping Ford's work. The study then examines each film for historical accuracy in the areas of people, places, and events; uniforms, equipment, and accouterments; the profession and garrison life; and finally, the American Indian and military operations.

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First of all I must thank my wife, Dana, who, over the many months, came to love the project as much as I. She truly understands and empathizes with the frontier military wife, who, over a century earlier wrote, "I had cast my lot with a soldier and where he was, was home to me."

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## INTRODUCTION

*Any time you make a successful picture there's always a lot of carping critics who start picking on it. Make a bad picture and they forget about it. But if it's successful, they start picking little nitty bitty things.* John Ford <sup>1</sup>

Perhaps no greater compliment could be paid a Hollywood director than to have every film he makes, as Ford put it, "picked on." In his case, this "picking" was truly a barometer of his success. According to one film student,

Ford has had a greater influence on the industry than any single director, but more importantly, his work comprises an artistic creation that is unequalled in the short history of motion pictures.

Throughout his career, which spanned six decades and 125 films, Ford was one of the most celebrated motion picture directors in Hollywood history. By 1947, he had won three of his four Academy Awards for Best Director, both Oscars for Best Documentary, and three New York Film Critics' Awards. Prior to his death in 1973, he received the American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award and was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Richard M. Nixon.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Ford, interview by Dan Ford, "Westerns, Cinerama, Color, Fort Apache, Yellow Ribbon", transcript, 11, John Ford Collection (FC), Manuscripts Department, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, B(ox).11, f(older).32. Unless otherwise noted, interview citations are transcripts of tapes recorded by Dan Ford.

<sup>2</sup>Peter Stowell, John Ford (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986); Janey Ann Place, "John Ford and Semiology of Film" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 1975), 6.

Although critical acclaim is the *raison d'être* of cultural Hollywood, ticket sales underpin the motion picture industry. Ford was a consistent winner at the box office and skillfully parted movie-goers from their hard-earned treasure. In exchange, they received his celluloid vision of reality. One Ford scholar stated, "[his] narrative fiction films, especially genre films, constitute a specific national mythology of the United States." In short, he was one of America's greatest chroniclers and mythmakers.<sup>3</sup>

Ford's most popular films depicted the Old West--often referred to as the "American morality play" for the themes addressed. When honored for his part in depicting the genre, however, he characteristically denied credit or culpability.

You say someone's called me the greatest poet of the Western Saga. I am not a poet, and I don't know what a Western saga is. I would say that is horse-shit. I'm just a hard-nosed, hard-working, run-of-the-mill director.<sup>4</sup>

Ford was tough and hard-working, but run-of-the-mill he certainly was not. He chose the frontier to stage themes he thought were important. He combined two of his favorites, sense of community and the military tradition, to create a significant body of work in the late 1940s.

The films Fort Apache (1948), She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949), and Rio Grande (1950) portray the frontier army in the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., xi; Stowell, xi.

<sup>4</sup>Jack Beatty, review of John Ford, by Andrew Sinclair, in *New Republic* 180 (31 March 1979): 37.

1870s and later became known as Ford's cavalry "trilogy." Although Ford never intended to make three films, the appellation is appropriate for several reasons. First, each film deals with the individual within the community of the frontier military. Next, similar character types with the same names appear in each picture. Third, the listener hears similar and recurring musical themes in all three works. Fourth, the same actors portray Ford's screen characters in each story. Lastly, the films were made in consecutive years.<sup>5</sup>

Author Frank Manchel described the films as "the greatest trilogy in motion picture history about the dog-faced soldiers who policed the frontier." Although one could claim they were the only such trilogy, and Ford featured the cavalry in other films, this body of work is special for two reasons. First, three cavalry films in as many years could reflect John Ford's attitude toward the military at the time. Second, since the films are not documentaries, they probably offer conflicts between historical accuracy and cinematic considerations. If for no other reasons than these, the pictures merit further analysis. The researcher, however, reaps the added benefit of exploring a specific period of military history typically shrouded in the mantle of American myth. He also explores a small part of film history and popular culture

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<sup>5</sup>Rio Grande was made for contractual reasons and to ensure future projects. See chapter 4 for a further discussion.

through the character of John Ford. By comparing the trilogy for historical accuracy against those factors shaping Ford's rendition of the cavalry, one is able to distinguish the myth from the reality.<sup>6</sup>

In the analysis that follows, the reader will find one chapter committed to John Ford and individual chapters devoted to each film. The chapter on Ford explores those factors that influenced the films of this study: his military experience, his partiality for certain art and music, the constraints imposed by the motion picture industry, his film methodology, and lastly, family influences.

Each film chapter addresses pertinent aspects of pre-production and provides a brief synopsis of the story. The remainder of the chapter assesses specific areas by asking: a) Does the film portray historical figures, events and locations? b) Are the military uniforms, accouterments and equipment realistically represented? c) How accurately does the film depict the professional aspects of the frontier cavalry? d) Are cavalry drills and maneuvers historically accurate? e) Are the social aspects of garrison life based upon historical evidence? and f) How is the American Indian depicted and how does the cavalry fight him? The final segment of the analysis draws conclusions from all three films and offers

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<sup>6</sup>Frank Manchel, *Cameras West* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), 113.

areas for further study. An appendix for each film includes additional details on film production and cast.

To ease understanding and minimize confusion, depicted film events are written in the present tense and historical events in the past tense. The reader will also find this study is not a critical review of Ford films in the cinematic sense. It is simply a comparative analysis of events cast in the light of cultural history. Not surprisingly, sound conclusions require in-depth research. Although these details will try the reader, it may be consoling to remember that it is also the "little nitty bitty things" that make the stuff of history.

## CHAPTER 1

### NATANI NEZ

*My name's John Ford. I make Westerns.*<sup>1</sup>

**Prologue.** John Ford was uniquely successful in his profession. When someone asked noted actor and director Orson Welles to name the three greatest directors in Hollywood history, he replied, "I like the old masters, by which I mean John Ford, John Ford, and John Ford." Personal and professional factors, however, influence even old masters, and Ford was no exception. His background; film research, technique, and constraints; military service; and personal ties to others influenced his work in the motion picture industry. Since all of these shaped the character and personality of John Ford, no single factor can be evaluated in isolation. To do so oversimplifies the effect and puts conclusions at risk. To give the analysis perspective, this chapter will begin with a brief biography of Ford prior to 1950, followed by a short character sketch of the director. The remainder of the chapter will examine each of the aforementioned factors.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Bogdanovich, *John Ford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Irving Rapper, interview taped in Los Angeles, 13 August 1980, Southern Methodist University Oral History Collection, as it appears in Paul F. Boller, Jr., and Ronald L. Davis, *Hollywood Anecdotes* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987), 69.

**Biography.** John Feeney, Jr., was born in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, to Irish saloon keeper John Feeney and his wife, Barbara, on 1 February 1895. The youngest of eight children, young "Jack" Feeney grew up in Portland, Maine. He enjoyed popularity early and starred in sports in high school. After three weeks at the University of Maine, Jack left in 1914 and moved to California to join his brother Francis in the "flickers."<sup>3</sup>

Francis had been successful in Hollywood, and had taken the last name of "Ford." Jack saw the practicality of being known as Francis' younger brother, and followed suit. Rooming with a rodeo cowboy named Hoot Gibson, Jack Ford lost no time learning his trade. Not handsome enough for acting, he started propping, writing, and helping Francis direct two-reel serials. Jack's poor eyesight kept him out of World War I, but it did not seem to affect his work with the camera or the ladies. By the time Jack married Mary McBride Smith in 1920, he had become an established Hollywood director at age twenty-five.

These early years taught Jack much about motion pictures, particularly Westerns. One Hollywood notable, Wyatt Earp, would visit Jack and Mary and recount his part in the

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<sup>3</sup>Many sources use the Irish Sean Aloysius O'Fienne. His brother Edward used O'Fearna. The remainder of this section and the following section were drawn primarily from Dan Ford, Pappy: The Life of John Ford (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 1979. Dan Ford's biography of his grandfather is the principal work of its kind and treats the director's life in detail. The biographer, however, occasionally commits errors in events and names.



Gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Actors Harry Carey and Edward "Pardner" Jones also gave Ford a realistic view of the West not seen in the slick features of Tom Mix. As a result, Ford would later claim, "I try to make [Westerns] true to life."<sup>4</sup>

Ford became restless after several years in Hollywood and suffered from a crisis of national identity. In 1921 he traveled to Galway, Ireland, to get a closer view of the Irish Revolution and to find his ancestral family. The relations he established in the Sinn Fein Ireland of the twenties forever established his loyalty to the country and the people.

After a few film successes, Jack became "John" Ford in the interest of respectability. In 1924 he made his greatest silent film, The Iron Horse, featuring veteran actor and close friend, George O'Brien. Although Ford took liberties with historical aspects of the building of the transcontinental railroad, he scored a major box-office success. John Ford found himself firmly established as one of the premier directors in Hollywood.

Success followed him for the rest of Hollywood's silent era. While he was perfecting his film style he also nurtured personal relationships. These relationships were heavily based upon admiration for Ford, his work, and his

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<sup>4</sup>In 1946 Ford told Earp's story in *My Darling Clementine*. William R. Florence, "John Ford . . . the Duke . . . and Monument Valley," *Arizona Highways* 57, no. 9 (September 1981): 31; Jones was also an ex-frontier lawman.

methods. His admirers eventually became his personal "stock company" of actors and crew.

Ford envied the social status Mary enjoyed through her family connections. A love-affair with the sea coupled with the respectability of rank prompted him to become a naval officer. On 12 September 1934, John Ford was appointed a Lieutenant Commander in the Naval Reserve. His military career was to figure prominently in his life and work.

In 1939 Ford made his first sound Western, and his first Western in thirteen years. The immensely successful Stagecoach later became a classic for several reasons. First, it featured a young Ford protégé and future star named John Wayne. Second, it redefined the genre and became known as the first modern Western. Lastly, the director began a lifelong romance with Monument Valley, the outdoor location for two of the three cavalry films in this study.<sup>5</sup>

A year later, Ford found himself longing to join the flurry of military preparedness that seemed to be passing him by. Even his friend Merian C. Cooper was involved in organizing Chennault's Flying Tigers. Tired of watching, Ford created an unofficial naval reserve unit of professional film makers. His Naval Field Photographic Reserve (commonly called the Field Photo) boasted the likes of Greg Toland, one of the

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<sup>5</sup>Maurice Zolotow, Shooting Star: A Biography of John Wayne (New York: Pocket Books, 1975), 151; Phil Hardy, The Western (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1983), 97.

best cameramen in the business. In October, the War Department officially recognized the group, but gave it no charter or parent organization. In 1941, Ford's "command" came under the auspices of William J. Donovan's newly-created Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.). Shortly thereafter, Ford began using his boat, the Araner, to monitor Japanese "fishing" activities off the coast of Baja California.

During the war, Ford and the Field Photo covered major combat actions around the world. His men filmed the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack, the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, the Battle of Midway, Operation TORCH in North Africa, military operations in the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater, and the Normandy Invasion. His documentaries on Pearl Harbor and Midway both won Academy Awards. Ford left the war as a Navy Captain with the Legion of Merit and a Purple Heart earned while personally filming the attack on Midway Island.

After the war, he established the Field Photo Home for veterans of his unit and their families. In 1946, he and Merian Cooper formed their own production company and called it Argosy Productions. The four principal investors were all former O.S.S. men (including Donovan). Later that year, they released My Darling Clementine with Fox. The star of the film, Henry Fonda, would repeat the following year in the first of the cavalry pictures.

**The Man.** The unassuming quotation that begins this chapter reveals the John Ford the public knew--a guy who described his films as simply "a job of work." The public Ford hated the Hollywood limelight, preferring instead the sanctuary of the Araner and the open seas. Humility, however, was not his only trait.

Jack Ford admired and demanded masculine qualities in others. He was profane, vulgar, drank heavily at times, and liked to play cards. At the same time, the manly Ford disliked sloppy drunks and hated to lose a card game. The comraderie of men with a bottle and cards became a special part of his work.

His military service ripened intense feelings of patriotism. Captain Ford had developed a strong sense of tradition, efficiency, and discipline. The military strengthened values of community and personal loyalty; its authoritarian manner neatly fitted his personality.

John Ford the director was a "rebel" who fought to keep his independence within the industry. He ruled with impugntiy on the set and his wrath was merciless. His ego resisted advice from writers, producers, and especially studio executives. Above all, John Ford shot a film the way he saw it.

"Pappy" Ford was not the best family man, but his family tolerated his indiscretions and lack of sensitivity. Although he made a considerable amount of money, he did not

always invest it wisely. Ford was temperamental, but had a wonderful sense of humor and a penchant for pranks. In the final analysis, John Ford was very human, with the strengths and frailties of his species.

**Preproduction.** Ford was always looking for new film ideas. His son, Patrick, stated, "Whatever music he heard, or story he read, or whatever sight he beheld was filed away in his mind for future use in a film." Once the concept reached preproduction, Ford would insist on thorough background research as long as it did not delay shooting or alter his concept of the film. He sent one screenwriter to conduct research for a film, then told him to forget it all--they were going to make the picture.<sup>6</sup>

Ford personally involved himself in the research process in ways distinctly Fordian. John Wayne recalled his mentor's approach:

Jesus he'd take a subject and read everything he could on it and then he'd go to some buff and make a statement and get into an argument to learn everything that the other fellow knew.

Ford demanded credibility, if not authenticity, in his films. According to Harry Carey, Jr., member of the stock company and

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<sup>6</sup>In 1951, Ford received a letter suggesting he make a film about the Tenth Cavalry Regiment--the Buffalo Soldiers. Nine years later he made *Sergeant Rutledge*. Glenn Armstrong, Washington, D.C., to John Ford, Hollywood, TLS, 26 September 1951, FC, Correspondence, August-November 1951, 9.2. Unless stated otherwise, citations refer to copies or drafts of the original correspondence; William Clell Howze, "The Influence of Western Painting and Genre Painting on the Films of John Ford" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1986), 18-19; John Ford interview, "Frank Nugent," FC, 8.11, f.32.

well-known character actor, Ford loved the right kind of props and wardrobe.<sup>7</sup>

Ford was knowledgeable of historical events, but was not an historian and certainly did not hesitate to shape events to suit his work. Noted Western actor William S. Hart, for example, thought Ford's long chase scene in Stagecoach was unrealistic. He felt the Indians would have simply shot the horses. Ford responded, "If they had, it would have been the end of the picture, wouldn't it?" In this case, Ford made a reasonable assumption the Apaches were more interested in the horses as remounts.<sup>8</sup>

Film critics have long realized the unique visual qualities of Ford films. The director unabashedly admitted a beautiful background never hurt the plot. He used extra footage and the same locations from previous films for later ones. Ford, however, went beyond filming picturesque scenes; he created images to which his audience would respond. His work created images of a legendary frontier that embellished the substance of the historical West.<sup>9</sup>

Ford shot footage for nine films in Monument Valley. Located astride the Arizona-Utah border, Monument Valley is

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<sup>7</sup>John Wayne interview, 1976, Tape 8, 12, FC, B.12, f.17; Harry Carey, Jr. interview, 25, FC, B.11, f.18.

<sup>8</sup>Boller and Davis, 257.

<sup>9</sup>John Ford interview, "Westerns," 11, FC, B.11, f.32; Shooting script, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, 16 October 1948, 108, FC, B.5, f.1.

the reservation home of the Navajo Indians. The location became so identified with the director that it was known as "Ford Country." In 1964, Ford said,

I think you can say that the real star of my Westerns has always been the land . . . My favorite location is Monument Valley; it has rivers, mountains, plains, desert . . . I feel at peace there. I have been all over the world, but I consider this the most complete, beautiful, and peaceful place on Earth . . . .

Using the valley's striking buttes and towering rock formations as his *mise en scène*, Ford sought figures striking enough to match this background.<sup>10</sup>

According to William Howze, Ford found the images for his films in magazine illustrations, on book jackets, and in books. The last thing Ford concerned himself with was historical technicalities.

In general, Ford looked to Western artists for the composition of action scenes. What he saw in the pictures of Remington, Russell, Schreyvogel, and others, he adapted to the medium of film and to his own vision, creating images equal to and often surpassing those that influenced him.

Patrick Ford corroborated this: "My father kept a copy of a collection by Schreyvogel close by his bedside . . . he pored over it dreaming up action sequences for his films." Howze states the book was My Bunkie and Ford borrowed certain details from the artist.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Bogdanovich, 10; Interview with *Cosmopolitan* in March, 1964 as it appears in Florence, 38.

<sup>11</sup>Howze, 18, 31, 30, 23, 25.

Another source of Ford's images came from magazines like the Saturday Evening Post. Harold Von Schmidt's illustrations for several of James Warner Bellah's stories in the magazine are strikingly similar to scenes in the films. Howze postulates Ford found Harold McCracken's Frederic Remington: Artist of the Old West (J.B. Lippincott Company, 1947) and Bernard DeVoto's Across the Wide Missouri (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947) very influential. DeVoto's work won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948 for history and offered generous samples of Alfred Jacob Miller's artwork. McCracken's description of Remington probably caught the director's eye. Here was a guy the masculine Ford could respect.

If any of our artists deserve the distinction of being strictly a painter of men and a man's man, it certainly is Remington.

.....  
This aversion to portraying the female was something he seems to have inherited along with his liking for horses, rugged individualism and unadulterated Americanism.

The influences of these works will reveal themselves in the following chapters.<sup>12</sup>

Howze also sees a relationship between Ford's Maine background and his Westerns. At the risk of oversimplification, the sea becomes desert and the fishermen become cavalrymen. Like John Ford, Winslow Homer was a Cape Elizabeth

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<sup>12</sup>Howze, 11, 15-17; Harold McCracken, Frederic Remington: Artist of the Old West (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1947), 80-81; While Remington and Schreyvogel accurately portrayed the frontier army, they painted an army ten to fifteen years older than depicted in the films.



resident. His works were well known at the time, and could have influenced the future director. Howze offers as proof the scenes of the army women who await the return of their cavalrymen, much like the sturdy Maine women who wait for their men to return from the sea.<sup>13</sup>

Music was an important ingredient in the Ford formula for success. He had used music on the set to create moods for cast and crew since the silent era; he had crew-member Danny Borzage play accordion during rehearsals or after filming was completed for the day. Ford would summon Harry Carey, Jr. at irregular times just to have him sing for the group. Ford's music had a distinct "folk" quality and embraced his American and Irish heritage. Actor Jimmy Stewart offered insight into Ford's passion:

On camera or backstage, music has always been an important part of John Ford Westerns. And by that, I don't mean background music. Pappy always told me that he'd rather hear good music than bad dialogue. But more than that, the music in a John Ford Western means something; it evokes a sense of tradition.

Ford tried to use authentic music first if it fit the purpose of the film. Otherwise, he used whatever he felt evoked the proper mood. As in art, Ford's inspiration for music came from various sources. His Uncle Mike used to sing "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon." He always remembered the tune and thought

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<sup>13</sup>Howze, 38-39.

it would make a terrific title for a motion picture, specifically a cavalry picture.<sup>14</sup>

**Production.** John Ford's film style became uniquely his own. Film editor and former child star Robert Parrish summed up Ford's technique when he said,

He knew exactly what he wanted to say. He very seldom shot more than one take; he used very little film, and was always under schedule or under budget.

Producers loved Ford the money-maker but despised Ford the director. When Samuel Goldwyn suggested Ford shoot more close-ups, the director gave him a John Ford response.

'Now, I'll tell you, Mr. Goldwyn, I'm making this picture the way I feel it should go. If I want a close-up this big,' and hit Goldwyn in the stomach with the back of his hand, 'I'll make 'em that big. Or if I want 'em this big,' and he struck Sam in the chest, 'they'll be this big.' Then, clenching his fist, he said, 'I might want them even bigger!'

Ford harassed scriptwriters to produce better work, and ignored them when their views differed from his. If producer or writer ventured onto the set, the director would greet them with a sullen, "Don't you have an office?" John Ford made it absolutely clear he was the sole navigator of his cinematic

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<sup>14</sup>Michael Nathan Budd, "A Critical Analysis of Western Films Directed by John Ford from 'Stagecoach' to 'Cheyenne Autumn'" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1975), 446; TIMEX Corporation and Bob Bannerman Associates, The American West of John Ford (CBS Television: 5 December 1971), transcript, 11, FC, 8.8, f.10; John Ford interview, "Westerns," 3-4, 13, FC, 8.11, f.32.

ship.<sup>15</sup>

Ford also had no patience for the details associated with film editing. He probably felt he was his own best editor and practiced that craft while filming. He considered, as Robert Parrish put it, "all the cutters and musicians and sound effects cutters as necessary evils." In actuality, these "necessary evils" improved his films on more than one occasion.<sup>16</sup>

Ford biographer and Hollywood director, Peter Bogdanovich, feels one Ford film offers parts of others from decade to decade. To evaluate one film in isolation, says Bogdanovich, is inappropriate. This aspect of film continuity is especially evident in the cavalry trilogy. The familiar faces of Ford's stock company are joined with recurring themes, music, and character names to constitute a body of work. Also, one cannot dismiss the fact the films were all based upon short stories by the same author.<sup>17</sup>

**The Military.** Ford's military service during the Second World War directly influenced the filming of Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, and Rio Grande. Prior to

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<sup>15</sup>Bogdanovich, 9; Boller and Davis, 78, 59.

<sup>16</sup>Bogdanovich, 9; Darryl Zanuck's editing of My Darling Clementine, for example, improved the story's clarity. Dan Ford, 212.

<sup>17</sup>Bogdanovich, 31.

the war, the military had been a diversion from Hollywood and a means to achieve social status. After the war, he joined every available veterans' group, wore his uniforms whenever the occasion allowed, and even began dressing for the set in a decidedly military style. His obsession for military glory, according to his grandson and biographer, Dan Ford, made him try any approach to get more medals, decorations, or awards.<sup>18</sup>

After the war, more than his appearance changed on the set. Both Wayne and Fonda noticed a kinder, more sympathetic Pappy. Bogdanovich felt Ford's work began to turn more melancholy. Other Ford habits, however, took on a more martial character. The cast and crew responded to the director with the respectful "yes, sir" required in military circles. In Monument Valley, the dinner bell never rang until Ford was seated at his usual place. When Bogdanovich questioned him about the men obeying Colonel Thursday in Fort Apache, even though it was obvious he was wrong and they were killed because of his error, Ford had an unequivocal response. "He was the Colonel, and what he says--goes; whether they agree with it or not--it still pertains."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>He started wearing fatigues and his navy baseball cap with his Captain's eagle on the front; Dan Ford, 206-207; The right decorations would ensure Ford's retirement one grade higher than that which he held. This could partly explain the appearance of the Medal of Honor in all three cavalry films.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 207; Bogdanovich, 23, 12, 86.

Fortunately for Ford, he enjoyed the same sort of independent action during the war he had enjoyed in Hollywood.

Parrish described him as

a cop hater by religion, by belief. He had a big streak of contempt for any kind of authority, any kind of paternal influence on him--all the producers, all the money--they were the enemy.

The militant John Ford didn't like taking orders; he was only happy when he was in charge. The difference now was he ran his set with a discipline honed from military experience.<sup>20</sup>

Hollywood released Ford's They Were Expendable following the war, but the public did not embrace the film. Not surprisingly, Americans in 1945 were tired of the Second World War. Ford realized, however, that patriotism and nationalism were still vibrant forces and could be exploited. He probably felt the public would be receptive to a military theme if it portrayed a different time period.

The emotional side of Ford was also receptive to such a project. His wartime experience with his men had touched him deeply, and his compassion revealed itself through the Field Photo Home. This heightened sense of belonging and community would later appear in his cavalry films. Research editor Katherine Clifton observed, " . . . [he] had a sympathy for the regular army, he identified with the regular army man on the frontier." His sympathy made Ford especially

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<sup>20</sup>ibid., 34.

receptive to story ideas dealing with the military. When retired army officer James Warner Bellah published Massacre in the Saturday Evening Post, he gave Ford the first of three vehicles to make a statement about the military. Ford loved the story the first time he read it and Argosy Productions bought it outright.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to his feelings for the common soldier, John Ford brought back a tremendous sense of accomplishment and pride from the war. He was proud of his work and proud of his country. An incident with Bellah in Portland on the Fourth of July is telling:

[Ford] Take off your hat when the colors go by.

[Bellah] I haven't got a hat.

[Ford] Then cross yourself, goddamit!

This feeling of nationalism showed itself in other ways. In an interview with Bogdanovich, Ford declared the good of the country more than outweighed the errors of any one leader. If it became necessary to lionize a failure, the welfare of the nation and its need for heroes demanded it. His philosophy would find its way to the screen in Fort Apache.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Katherine Clifton interview, side 1, 9, FC, B.11, f.20; Dan Ford, 214; Ford was on a train to San Francisco to pick up his boat, the Lurline, when he read Massacre. At the next stop he told his daughter Barbara to telegraph Cooper to buy the story. She garbled the message and Cooper radioed Ford on the boat to tell him he couldn't find a horse named "Massacre" on the sporting page. John Ford interview, "Westerns," 3, FC, B.11, f.32.

<sup>22</sup>Dan Ford notes on James Warner Bellah, FC, B.11, f.16; Bogdanovich, 34.

**Family and Personal Ties.** John Ford's family, friends, and acquaintances played a major part in his work. A brief look at the most important personalities shows this influence.

The screenplays of all three films were based upon short stories by James Warner Bellah. Ford first met Bellah in Delhi during the war while he was filming Victory in Burma for Admiral Louis Mountbatten. Both men took an instant liking to each other and would associate more closely in future years. John Wayne said,

James Warner Bellah was quite a character, too. Invaluable in Jack's life, he really helped him too. His style of writing with the Saturday Evening Post cavalry stories--the language gave a feel of authenticity of the period. Almost Victorian. Beautiful.

Dan Ford saw Bellah as "a man whose time has past [and] who glories in the beat of a forgotten bugle call. A romanticist. To the core." Indeed, Bellah surrounded himself with military tradition, particularly at home. He had pictures of his mother wearing Douglas MacArthur's campaign hat. His library contained works on military leadership, campaigns and battles: several copies of Douglas Southall Freeman's Lee's Lieutenants crowded the shelves. Instead of contemporary decorations, regimental flags and campaign banners adorned the walls. Bellah's "carefully researched Western frontier stories"

reflected his Victorian background and offered the sentiments Ford would be susceptible to after the war.<sup>23</sup>

Former New York Times critic Frank Nugent was the complete opposite of Bellah. Even though Nugent was Ford's son-in-law and screen writer, Ford felt the half-Irish, half-Jewish Nugent was merely competent, rather unsophisticated, and still had the traits of a "typical reporter." They did not have a close personal relationship. Bellah characterized Nugent as "one of the hardest screen writers I've ever known in my life." He was a perfectionist and would fight with Ford "tooth and nail . . . ." This relationship was strange given the successful scripts and the affinities Nugent shared with the director. Ford felt Nugent

looked on the army always as a kind of brother in his writing because he had a feeling that the man in uniform was riding a horse and wielding a knout--a hitting instrument.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to Bellah and Nugent, Ford's closest associates all shared the common thread of military service. His partner at Argosy, Merian C. Cooper, rose to the rank of Brigadier General in the Air Corps by war's end. Nugent's collaborator on She Wore a Yellow Ribbon was Laurence Stallings. Stallings was a former Marine Lieutenant who lost a

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<sup>23</sup>James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 1, 1, FC, B.11, f.16; John Wayne interview, Tape 2, Side 4, 5, FC, B.12, f.17; Dan Ford notes on James Warner Bellah, FC, B.11, f.16; Bellah interview, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>John Ford interview, "Frank Nugent," FC, B.11, f.32; James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 1, 8-9, FC, B.11, f.16; Katherine Clifton interview, Side 4, 7, FC, B.11, f.20.



leg during World War I. Like Nugent, Stallings would fight savagely with Ford. Some called it a Marines versus Navy thing. Nevertheless, his work for Ford was always top-notch. Ford's military connections affected several other aspects of the cavalry trilogy and will be discussed in due course.<sup>25</sup>

John Ford's ties to the Indian cannot be understated; they show themselves in all three films. Although he once stated, "I've killed more Indians than Custer, Beecher and Chivington put together . . . ," Ford had a special relationship with the Navajo Indians at this time. They served as "authentic" extras for his films and provided other services as well. Ford liked to tell a story about a Navajo medicine man:

The original one was a fella named Fat--this fella we have now is just one of his disciples. I used to tell Harry Goulding and get anything I ordered. Thunderclouds . . . One night I said to Harry, 'Tell 'im we need snow. Need the Valley covered with snow.' Next morning, I stepped outa my room. A thin layer of snow covered the Valley.

Ford was serious. Harry Carey, Jr. stated that anyone who laughed at this story was kicked off the set. Harry Goulding, who used to own the Lodge in Monument Valley, said Ford made it a point to help the Navajos financially. He did this by

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<sup>25</sup>Cooper almost graduated from the Naval Academy in 1913, but was denied commissioning for disciplinary reasons. He later served in the Georgia National Guard during World War I and under General Haller in the Polish Air Service. James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 1, 2-3, FC, 8.11, 8.16; Stallings entered the Marine Corps prior to the First World War and lost his leg at Chateau-Thierry. Bitter at losing a career in the Marine Corps, he turned to other pursuits. At one time Stallings had a successful play, a hit novel, a best seller and a hit picture to his credit as a writer. An unhappy marriage and the loss of his other leg made him a formidable foe. Ibid., 8.

filming on their reservation. On another occasion he air-lifted food to them after a severe blizzard. This kindness was not lost on the Indians. They called Ford "Natani Nez" (the Tall Soldier) and took him into the tribe.<sup>26</sup>

John Ford knew the chroniclers of the American West as well as the inhabitants. The noted artist Charles M. Russell was a personal friend. Russell lived down the street and would borrow books from Ford. When the books returned, they would invariably bring with them a portrait of an Indian, cowboy, or scout. Chapter 3 explores Russell's influence on She Wore a Yellow Ribbon.<sup>27</sup>

In total, John Ford was a complex, demanding, and highly successful director. His concept of a film was colored by his personality and external influences. He sought realism in his work, but never sacrificed a good story or picture in the interest of historical accuracy. Years later, Jimmy Stewart would summarize his director's technique by stating, "And that's what John Ford does. He prints the legend--and that's a fact." Stewart's assessment would take on special meaning in the first of Ford's cavalry epics, Fort Apache.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Bogdanovich, 104, 18; Harry Carey, Jr. interview, 3 and 4, 3, FC, B.11, f.18; Bogdanovich, 14; Goulding played a significant part also. In 1939 he went to Hollywood to sell Monument Valley as a film location. He knew the added revenue would help the financially depressed Navajos. Florence, 28.

<sup>27</sup>John Ford interview, "Westerns," 4, 13, FC, B.11, f.32.

<sup>28</sup>Transcript, The American West of John Ford, 16, FC, B.8, f.10.

## CHAPTER 2

### FORT APACHE

*When the legend becomes fact--print the legend.* <sup>1</sup>

**Preproduction.** Fort Apache was the first of the three cavalry films directed by John Ford and co-produced with Merian C. Cooper. Initially titled War Party, Frank Nugent's screenplay was based on the Saturday Evening Post short story, Massacre, by James Warner Bellah. Nugent stated the film's goal in the story line: "It is the intention of the makers of this picture to re-create a little-known phase of American history; life at a frontier Army post in the 1870's."<sup>2</sup>

To recreate "life at a frontier Army post in the 1870's" would require the professional services of technical advisors. Major Philip J. Kieffer, U.S. Army (retired) and Miss Katherine Spaatz share the credits for Fort Apache.

Major Kieffer's contributions to the film are not documented. His work as an "extra" seems to have overshadowed his advising. Given Ford's predisposition to disregard advice, this may not be surprising. From all accounts, Kieffer

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<sup>1</sup>Paramount Pictures, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, directed by John Ford, produced by William Goldbeck and John Ford, 1962.

<sup>2</sup>Richard B. Jewell with Vernon Harbin, The RKO Story, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1982), 228; James Warner Bellah, "Massacre," Saturday Evening Post, 22 February 1947, 18-19, 140, 142, 144, 146; Story line, War Party, FC, 1, B.5, f.8.

was qualified to render technical advice. After graduation from the United States Military Academy in 1911, he was assigned first to the Fourth Cavalry, then later to the Thirteenth. As a junior officer he saw service on the Arizona and Texas borders and served with former frontier regulars. When he resigned from the army on 16 February 1920, he had significant experience as an adjutant--the same position he holds in Fort Apache. By 1947, Kieffer was an "actor, stage director, [and] manager of companies and theaters."<sup>3</sup>

Miss Spaatz conducted substantive background research and regularly corresponded with the story editor, Katherine Clifton. It appears Spaatz was the film's historical "fireman" who handled specific questions for Nugent and Clifton. "Tatty" was the daughter of the first Air Force Chief of Staff, General Carl "Tooe" Spaatz; she worked from their Fort Myer home and used veteran army officer General Hamilton

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<sup>3</sup>Argosy Pictures Corporation Personnel List, 15 May 1947, 2-3, FC, 8.5, f.8; Argosy suggested Kieffer be taken off salary as a technical advisor and paid only as an actor. He would be paid extra for his technical advice as warranted. Jack Baur to John Ford, Argosy Pictures Corporation Inter-Department Communication, TLS, 14 July, 1947, FC, 8.2, July 1947; "Dutch" Kieffer was an ambitious cadet who profited from his previous enlisted experience in the coast artillery. Even though he held an Acting Sergeancy, he resented not being ranked higher. His imperious attitude prompted one classmate to call him "Caesar"; another nickname was "Almighty." He apparently ran into disciplinary problems, for "his chevrical life was ended by the Com." He was also a member of the Catholic Choir. The Howitzer, 1911 (Philadelphia: The Hoskins Press, 1911), 62; Adjutant General's Office, Official Army Register, January 1, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 250; As a Second Lieutenant in the Fourth Cavalry, Kieffer was stationed at Fort Huachuca, Arizona for two years. After duty in Hawaii, he participated in the Punitive Expedition into Mexico in 1916 with the Thirteenth Cavalry. George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York Since Its Establishment in 1802, ed. Wirt Robinson (Saginaw, Mich.: Seemann & Peters, 1920), 1533; This author believes Kieffer plays the part of Lieutenant Gates in the film. Although the credits do not corroborate this, the factors of age, prior service, and physical resemblance to Cadet Kieffer argue for this conclusion. (See appendix A); Ibid., Supplement Volume IX, 1940-1950, ed. Charles N. Branham, 1911.

Hawkins (West Point Class of 1894) for information. In addition to the Library of Congress, she conducted research at the Southwest Museum Library in Los Angeles. While there, she took notes from The Story of El Tejon by Helen S. Griffin and Arthur Woodward, Bourke on the Southwest by Lansing Bloom, and Five Years a Cavalryman by H.H. McConnell. She also took notes from Elizabeth Custer's Following the Guidon and Boots and Saddles. Spaatz later went to Arizona with Katherine Clifton, interviewed an old cavalry sergeant's widow, and talked to her own grandmother (who began married life in the Seventh Cavalry in Arizona during the 1880s).<sup>4</sup>

To ensure he had complete background material, Ford sent Nugent to the Southwest for seven weeks to conduct additional research. As if this was not enough, both Ford and Cooper conducted their own research in Arizona for Fort Apache and possible future Westerns.<sup>5</sup>

**The Story.** Lieutenant Colonel Owen Thursday, accompanied by his daughter Philadelphia, arrives from the East to assume command of a cavalry regiment at Fort Apache, Arizona

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<sup>4</sup>Katherine Spaatz to Katherine Clifton, TL's, FC, Correspondence, January-August 1947, B.2; General Spaatz graduated from West Point in 1914, and was therefore in his first year when Kieffer was a senior; Research notes, FC, B.5, f.8, 1947; The Southwest Museum in 1947 was a small concern--as late as 1961 the museum only had 1,250 items. Philip M. Hamer, ed., A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 18-19; Branham, *ibid.*, 62-63; Katherine S. Bell (nee Spaatz), London, England, to Jeffrey C. Prater, Leavenworth, Kans., LS, 25 April 1989.

<sup>5</sup>Katherine Clifton interview, side 1, p. 9, FC, B.11, f.20.

Territory. Lieutenant Michael O'Rourke, son of the regiment's sergeant major, meets the Thursdays enroute and accompanies them to the fort.

Thursday meets Sergeant Major O'Rourke and brusquely orders him to sound "Officer's Call." After the men assemble, Thursday immediately assigns Lieutenant Gates as Adjutant and reassigns Captain Collingwood to command a troop. Captain York is relieved of temporary regimental command and also returned to troop command. Thursday then briefs the officers on his military philosophy. Part of that philosophy requires strict adherence to proper wear of the uniform.

Exasperated by her bare quarters and lack of furniture, Philadelphia appeals to Mrs. Collingwood, a previous acquaintance. With Mrs. O'Rourke's help, the commander's quarters are soon supplied with furniture and a Mexican servant girl.

Michael and Philadelphia go riding in the desert and find two cavalymen killed by renegade Apaches of Diablo's band. After receiving O'Rourke's report, Thursday harshly reprimands him for taking Philadelphia out without his permission. Before a detail can bury the slain troopers it is attacked by the Apaches. A running fight ensues, but Thursday and a supporting troop drive the Indians off.

At the reservation, Thursday and York confront Silas Meacham, the agent. Despite Meacham's protests, the officers find rifles and whiskey, which they order destroyed.

To satisfy his secret desire for glory, Thursday uses York to convince the Apache chief Cochise to return to American soil. Philadelphia and Michael announce their intention to wed, but Thursday opposes the marriage because Michael's father is an enlisted man.

The regiment leaves to capture Cochise. Underestimating his enemy's strength, Thursday reluctantly meets with the chief. The colonel insults Cochise, and threatens to attack if the Apaches do not return to the reservation. When York questions his orders, Thursday sends the Captain and Lieutenant O'Rourke to the rear with the supply train. York watches as Thursday foolishly leads his men into a murderous cross fire by the waiting Indians.

Years later, York, the new regimental commander, confirms the legend of Thursday's heroism that has grown in the press. He does this to protect the regiment and the cavalry. Michael and Philadelphia are married and have a son. After greeting the child, York leads his men on a campaign against Geronimo.

**The Characters.** Although carefully modeled on the careers of other officers of the period, the character of Owen Thursday is purely fictitious. Ford presents Thursday as a strait-laced commander who demands strict adherence to army regulations. A West Pointer, Brevet Major General Thursday

is a bitter and disappointed officer who hates the thought of frontier duty.<sup>6</sup>

Ford's critics and admirers assert the Thursday character is based upon George Armstrong Custer. Indeed, the two have much in common. Their ranks match; their Civil War careers are comparable; their attitudes on initial frontier duty are similar; and both careers are ended by overwhelming Indian forces. Like Custer, Thursday achieves the fame and glory in death he sought while living. An Eastern newspaper reporter echoes this sentiment when he states, "He's the hero of every schoolboy in America." The glory of "Thursday's Charge" and the valor of his regiment are perpetuated despite the foolhardiness of his actions. Here the similarities end. Unlike Custer, the widower Thursday is preoccupied with proper military dress. He has no respect for the Indian and no previous experience in Indian warfare. If one accepts the regiment and time period assumed in the following discussion, the most likely candidate for Owen Thursday would have been Lieutenant Colonel J.P. Hatch.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>According to the script, Thursday fought at Cumberland and Sudley's Station during the Civil War. This could refer to any number of "Cumberlands" and Sudley "Church," "Ford," or "Road" in Virginia. Shooting script, Fort Apache, 11, FC, B.5, f.7; Character sketch of Brevet Major General Owen Thursday, U.S.A., FC, B.5, f.8.

<sup>7</sup>Review of Fort Apache in "Movies: Laugh, Damn You!" by Robert Hatch, New Republic, 12 July 1948, 26; Young Lieutenant Custer also camped at a "Cumberland": Cumberland Landing. Photograph from the Library of Congress as it appears in Ronald H. Bailey, Forward to Richmond, Civil War Series (Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, 1983), 137. Custer's respect for the Indian during his early campaigns can be found in his My Life on the Plains or, Personal Experiences with Indians, with an introduction by Edgar I. Stewart (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978).



The other central figure in Fort Apache is Captain (Brevet Colonel) Kirby York. Unlike his superior, York understands the enemy. His belief in the spirit of the regulation and his subsequent questioning of Thursday's commands create much of the conflict in the film. It takes Thursday's death to teach York the meaning of loyalty and leadership, and he ironically becomes the major supporter of the Thursday myth. After assuming command of the regiment, York mirrors his former commander in dress and deportment.<sup>8</sup>

The remaining characters in the film are also fictitious. Frank Nugent did, however, conduct historical research to give them believable military careers. Sergeant Major O'Rourke, for example, tells Thursday he fought with the 69th New York Volunteer Regiment and was part of the Irish Brigade during the war. The 69th was indeed a regiment of the Irish Brigade and saw extensive action. In the main, Nugent's research probably only helped Ford visualize his characters, for the film does not explore careers in any depth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Character sketch of Capt. Kirby Calvin York, 2, FC, B.S, f.8; Michael Nathan Budd, "A Critical Analysis of Western Films Directed by John Ford from 'Stagecoach' to 'Cheyenne Autumn'" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1975), 63, 74.

<sup>9</sup>Nugent's sources are unknown. The Indian characters are based upon historical evidence and examined later in this chapter. Other character sketches include Lieutenant O'Rourke, Captain Collingwood, Sergeant Major O'Rourke, Mrs. Collingwood, Philadelphia Thursday, Sergeant Mulcahy, Sergeant Shattuck, and several other characters reworked in the script. FC, B.S, f.8; "William B. Stafford, Adjutant General," for example, represents Brigadier General E.D. Townsend, Adjutant General from 1869-1880. Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army from Its Organization, September 29, 1789, to March 2, 1903 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government, 1903, facsimile repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), Vol. 1, 38; Bailey, *Ibid.*, 162-63; Nugent played up to Ford by giving the characters in the sketches traits or talents the director admired.

**The Places.** The film's title provides the location and first reference for historical analysis. Originally named Camp Ord in honor of the military Commander of Arizona, this post was established on 16 May 1870. Successively named Mogollon and Thomas, on 2 February 1871 the name was changed to Camp Apache as a token of friendship with the Apache Indians. The post was not renamed Fort Apache until 5 April 1879. One assumes Ford's Fort Apache exists by that name in the early 1870s, since the main antagonist in the film, Cochise, actually died in 1874.<sup>10</sup>

The real Camp Apache was situated among the timber in the remote White Mountains of eastern Arizona and enjoyed pleasant summers. Ford used the fort on the Corrigan Ranch movie lot in Southern California, but accentuated the isolation by filming the outdoor action amidst the magnificent beauty of towering buttes. These scenes were shot in Monument Valley, approximately 210 air miles north of the depicted location.<sup>11</sup>

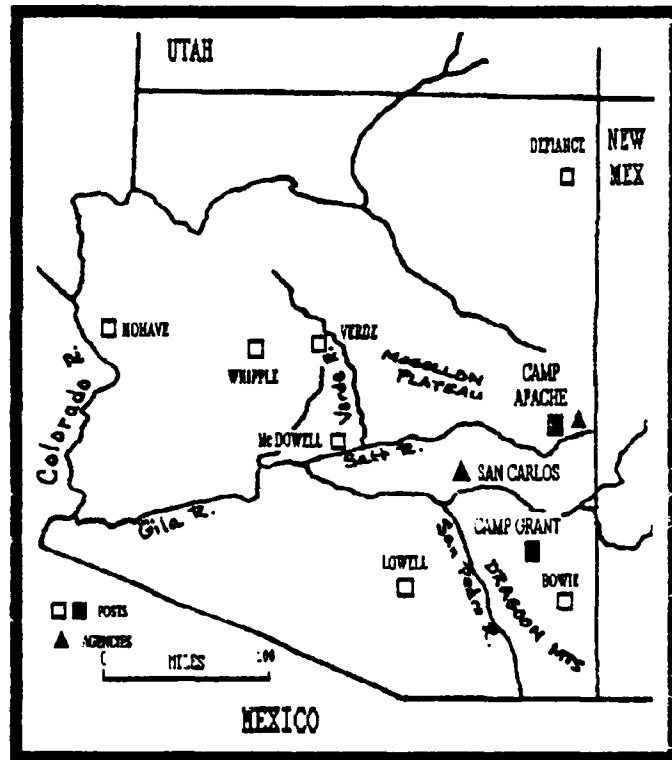
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<sup>10</sup>Ray Brandes, Frontier Military Posts of Arizona (Globe, Ariz.: 1960), 10-11; United States Army, "Fort Apache, Arizona" as it appears in Histories of Army Posts (Reprinted from the Recruiting News), 38; The story line to War Party and Nugent's character sketches specify Fort Bowie as the regiment's garrison. FC, B.S, f.8; Since Argosy owned the title, "Fort Apache" (which was more descriptive and had a higher audience appeal), "War Party" was dropped and Bowie was forgotten. Other titles considered were None But the Brave, Girl I Left Behind Me, War Paint, Boots and Saddles, The Bright Sword (no test), and Gentlemen in Blue (no test). Title Research Tests, TL, 19 January 1948, FC, B.S, f.8.

<sup>11</sup>Brandes, 10-11; Katherine Spaatz sought information about Forts Laramie and D.A. Russell in Wyoming, and unnamed forts in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., to Katherine Spaatz, Fort Myer, Va., TL, 14 May 1947, FC, Correspondence, January-June 1947, B.2; "Corriganville," On Video, March 1989, 50.

Fort Grant, mentioned in the picture as being 110 miles away, refers to the Camp Grant established in 1872 near the present day town of Safford, Arizona. Camp Grant was officially designated a fort the same day as Camp Apache--five years after Cochise's death.<sup>12</sup>

**The Events.** Ford never tells the viewer which regiment Thursday commands. The only cavalry regiments stationed at Camp Apache during the early 1870s were the First Cavalry (June 1870 to May 1873), and the Fifth Cavalry (May 1873 to 1875). The Fifth Cavalry is the unit most likely depicted in the film, for only the Fifth could have conducted operations against Cochise and later against Geronimo. Since the viewer



**Figure 1** Arizona Territory in 1873

<sup>12</sup>Robert W. Frazer, *Forts of the West: Military Forts and Presidios and Posts Commonly Called Forts West of the Mississippi River to 1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 6, 9; Ford's writers knew the location of military posts in Arizona. Miss Spaatz provided them with a photostated map of the military divisions of the west in 1877, as well as a list of forts in Arizona in 1870-72. Tatty Spaatz to Katherine Clifton, TL, 3 August 1947, FC, Correspondence, August-October 1947, B.2.

knows Thursday arrives at Fort Apache on Washington's Birthday, one could claim the film depicts events from 22 February 1874 until Cochise's death in June of that year. Unfortunately, there are too many other inconsistencies for this to be true. For example, York could not have commanded the same regiment at Fort Apache several years later, as the Fifth had been relieved by the Sixth Cavalry in 1875.<sup>13</sup>

It was common practice in the 1870s to assign individual battalions or companies from a single regiment to one or more posts. By 1873, the Fifth Cavalry had been in Arizona for at least two years. That year, Companies B, C, H, and I were assigned to Camp Apache. In the film, Thursday and his entire regiment (save the supply train) are annihilated. When York sends Lieutenant O'Rourke to Fort Grant for help, one supposes the relief column will be from a different command. In reality, Companies A, F, G, K, L, and M of the same Fifth Cavalry were assigned to Camp Grant in 1873. O'Rourke, then, guides the remainder of his regiment to the battle site.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>In Nugent's story line, it was the Thirteenth Cavalry Regiment (which had not yet been formed). Story line to *War Party*, FC, 8.5, f.8; In the script, Thursday is to assume command of the equally fictitious Sixteenth Cavalry Regiment. Shooting script, *Fort Apache*, 33, FC, 8.5, f.7; S.C. Agnew, *Garrisons of the Regular U.S. Army--Arizona, 1851-1899* (Arlington, Va.: Council on Abandoned Military Posts, 1974), 2, 20-21; Assuming York was brevetted to lieutenant colonel, the time between the massacre and his new command is approximately three years, based upon the age of Michael and Philadelphia's young son.

<sup>14</sup>The army had too much territory to protect and too few troops; Theophilus F. Rodenbough and William L. Haskin, eds., *The Army of the United States: Historical Sketches of Staff and Line with Portraits of Generals-in-Chief* (New York: Argonaut Press Ltd., 1966), first printing, 1896, xi; Distinction is made between duty in Arizona and duty at Camp Apache, which were not the same; Agnew, *ibid.*

There are no records of major military defeats by the Apaches during this period. The regimental records of the Sixth Cavalry in 1881 do mention, however, a "massacre" of troops by the Indians at Cibicu Creek, Arizona. On 15 August, Colonel Eugene A. Carr, regimental commander, with seventy-nine soldiers, twenty-three Indian scouts, and nine civilians departed Fort Apache to arrest an Apache mystic named Nakaidoklini. On the evening of the thirtieth, the column was attacked by three hundred Apaches and forced to fight a running battle the forty-six miles back to the fort. When they arrived the next day, Carr learned the command was believed to have perished in a "Custer-type massacre." Only one officer, eight enlisted and five civilians died; one officer and three enlisted were wounded. There are historical precedents for the high casualties depicted in Fort Apache, but not in Arizona in the early seventies. Only the Fetterman debacle in Dakota Territory in 1866 and Custer's defeat on the Little Bighorn in 1876 come close to matching the slaughter of Thursday's regulars.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>The most significant loss was on September 17, 1874, when K Company of the Fifth suffered three casualties at Cave Creek. The only officer death during this period was Lieutenant Jacob Almy (murdered by Indians at the San Carlos Agency in 1873). Chronological List of Actions, &c., with Indians from January 15, 1837, to January 1891 (Washington, D.C.: Adjutant General's Office, 1891, reprint, Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1979), 25, 53-59, 61, 75; Odie B. Faulk, Crimson Desert: Indian Wars of the American Southwest (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 181; Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891 (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1973), 105, 260. There were several variations on the Apache mystic's name. Another common form was Noch-ay-delklinne. Dan L. Thrapp, The Conquest of Apacheria (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 99.

In 1949, an admirer wrote Ford to congratulate him on She Wore a Yellow Ribbon and to inform him that a platoon of the Fifth Cavalry was "wiped out" near Fort Selden, New Mexico. The admirer enclosed a hat ornament recovered from the massacre site as a gift for the director. In his return letter, Ford revealed he had family affiliations with the Fifth Cavalry. This incident occurred after Fort Apache, and while a firm connection cannot be made, it is nevertheless intriguing.<sup>16</sup>

Like Thursday, Lieutenant Colonel Hatch was an outsider who commanded the regiment from 15 January until 10 April 1873. Although he was transferred, not killed, his brief tenure fits Thursday very well. Records also show Major E.A. Carr, like York, was a senior officer of the Fifth who was subsequently promoted and given command (on 10 April 1873) after the short assignment of his predecessor. Carr served as a regimental commander at Fort Apache, survived a "Custer-type massacre," and was involved in the campaign against Geronimo. The closest match for Lieutenant O'Rourke would have been Second Lieutenant Robert London, West Point Class of 1873, who was assigned to Company I of the Fifth at Camp Apache on 13 June 1873.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Thomas B. Dawson to John Ford, 28 November 1949, and Ford to Dawson, November 1949, TL's, FC, Correspondence, November-December 1949, B.2.

<sup>17</sup>Heitman, 71-72; Adjutant General's Office, G.O. no. 82, 5 August 1873, Index of General Orders, 1873 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1874).

Film critics and contemporaries felt Ford rendered the Custer defeat in the film, but set it in the Southwest with different adversaries. Jimmy Stewart stated,

In Fort Apache, Ford created his own version of the battle at Little Big Horn with Henry Fonda in a role modeled on Custer. Ford's version may be at variance with history, but his interest was not in the man, but in the hero.

Ford never denied these claims and in other interviews spoke about the Custer symbolism.

We've had a lot of people who were supposed to be great heroes, and you know damn well they weren't. But it's good for the country to have heroes to look up to. Like Custer--a great hero. Well, he wasn't. Not that he was a stupid man--but he did a stupid job that day...On the other hand, of course, the legend has always had some foundation.

Ford was a personal friend of former Seventh Cavalry commander, Colonel Tommy Tompkins. According to one source, Tompkins refused retirement or promotion until 1919, when his regiment earned the regimental "colors" lost at the Little Big Horn. Tompkins embodied the values Ford reflected on the screen.<sup>18</sup>

The visual image of Thursday's last command appears freely borrowed from Harold Von Schmidt's painting Fetterman Massacre, which illustrated Bellah's original story in the Saturday Evening Post. Von Schmidt, it happens, painted an oil for RKO in 1947 titled, Apache Massacre. He explained,

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<sup>18</sup>Dan Ford notes on James Warner Bellah, FC, B.11, f.16; Bogdanovich, 34, 86; The American West of John Ford, transcript, 15, FC, B.8, f.10; Bogdanovich, 86; Dawson-Ford letters, *ibid*.

This picture was painted for John Ford to advertise his movie Fort Apache, a fictionalized version of the Custer Massacre transferred to a setting in the Southwest, with Apaches as the antagonists. It was a challenge to depict the same kind of situation in a different way.

Ford must have felt the same, for he was indeed "at variance with history."<sup>19</sup>

**The Uniforms.** The most easily recognizable image of the military is presented through its uniforms. They tell the historian a great deal about the unit, its mission, its self-image, and provide a useful chronology based upon changes to those uniforms. Costume research for Fort Apache was conducted by D.R. Overall-Hatswell (see Appendix A).

Research indicates regimental commanders on the frontier prescribed how or what their men would wear. In keeping with that practice, Thursday chastises his officers for their sloppy dress. He declares "the uniform is not a subject for individual whimsical expression" and uses Lieutenant O'Rourke as a model for proper wear. While Thursday considers his men's appearance shabby, it is probably better than it was in reality. Eben Swift observed the Fifth Cavalry in the field in 1876 and described them as "a motley crowd, with untrimmed, scraggly beards, clothes roughly patched with canvas, gunny sacks, or anything at hand; hats of buffalo skin

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<sup>19</sup>Walt Reed, Harold Von Schmidt Draws and Paints the Old West (Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Press, 1972), 131, 134.



or none at all; footwear of rags . . . ." Ironically, Thursday and Lieutenant O'Rourke succumb to the environment and modify their uniforms appropriately. The lieutenant takes on the appearance of the other officers. Thursday fashions a havelock by adding a white handkerchief to his kepi, and wears a bandanna around his neck. Both practices ran contrary to uniform regulations of the day. Whether the white kerchief was authorized or not may be academic. A photograph taken at Fort Bowie, Arizona Territory, in the seventies or eighties shows a mounted officer who appears to be similarly attired.<sup>20</sup>

The uniforms worn by the Fifth Cavalry in Arizona in the early 1870s were prescribed by the army regulations of 1861. Even though the next major change occurred in 1872, frontier outposts received new issues later than the rest of the army. With some exceptions for the officers, the enlisted men in Fort Apache in 1873 should be wearing uniforms specified prior to 1872.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Budd (67) feels the men are not dressed individually, but identically and "properly" for the Arizona environment; Eben Swift, "Personal Memoranda," (U.S. Military Academy), 70-71, as it appears in Edward M. Coffman, The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 263; Photograph from the National Archives as it appears in Benjamin Capps, The Great Chiefs, Old West Series (Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, 1975), 84-85.

<sup>21</sup>1851 pattern uniforms were plentiful, and a fiscally conservative Congress assumed the army would use all of its Civil War surplus before new appropriations were needed. As these stocks started to deplete in 1872, and complaints about the current clothing continued to arrive from the field, the army was forced to adopt new uniforms. Although these uniforms were slated for issue no later than 31 December 1872, units did not receive them for another eleven months. Coffman, 343; Report of the Secretary of War, 1880, Chief of Clothing Bureau Report, 151, as it appears in Randy Steffen, The Horse Soldier, 1776-1942: The United States Cavalryman: His Uniforms, Arms, Accoutrements, and Equipments, Volume II, The Frontier, the Mexican War, the Civil War, the Indian Wars, 1851-1880 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 107.

The 1872 campaign hat was a black felt, broad-brimmed affair. Officers at Camp Apache would have acquired these hats by December 1872; the enlisted men began receiving the new issue in the middle of 1873. The inferior headgear soon prompted men to seek more durable replacements, including straw hats from the sutler's. The majority of the cavalrymen in the film wear light-colored campaign hats. Although this style was not authorized by regulation until the eighties, a photograph taken in May 1875 at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, clearly shows officers and men of the Fifth Cavalry wearing light-colored campaign hats. Whether Ford or his technical advisors were aware of this is unknown. In any event, one can make a sound argument for the historical accuracy of the campaign hats in Fort Apache. The only shortcoming is the uniformity of wear. Headgear of that period was characterized by variation, not conformity. In garrison, the kepi was the regulation cap. Throughout the picture, Ford omits the regimental number and company letter above the angle of crossed sabers on the front of the kepi. Thursday's kepi has the authentic braided design on the top so prevalent during the Civil War.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>James S. Hutchins, "The Army Campaign Hat of 1872," Military Collector and Historian 16 (Fall 1964): 65-73 passim; Photograph from the Nebraska State Historical Society as it appears in Louis A. Holmes, Fort McPherson, Nebraska: Guardian of the Tracks and Trails (Lincoln: Johnsen Publishing Company, 1963), 81; Adjutant General's Office, Regulations for the Uniform and Dress of the Army of the United States, July, 1872, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 9-10, as they appear in Jacques Noel Jacobsen, Jr., comp. and ed., Regulations and Notes for the Uniform of the Army of the United States, 1872 2d ed., (Staten Island, N.Y.: Manor Publishing, 1971).

Bandannas of varying color and design were worn by the frontier cavalry to provide protection from blowing dust. In Fort Apache most of the troopers and officers wear a various assortment of kerchiefs, which is realistic for that period. Martha Summerhayes observed the same Fifth Cavalry "depicted" in the film on her trip to Camp Apache in 1874. She describes them as wearing "the flannel shirt, handkerchief tied about the neck, and broad campaign hat." The neckerchiefs were common items for many years. In 1876, a journalist noticed the "loose handkerchiefs knotted about the neck" of the Fifth Cavalry troopers.<sup>23</sup>

The viewer sees two kinds of gloves in the film. The most prominent are the prescribed officers' gauntlets which are worn by the enlisted men instead of the issue white Berlin gloves. Thursday elects to wear white dress gloves on campaign instead of the more practical gauntlets.<sup>24</sup>

The formal dance sequences in Fort Apache allow examination of dress uniforms. With minor exceptions, these uniforms are accurately represented. In one scene, Thursday correctly wears the dress coat of his brevetted rank with lieutenant colonel shoulder straps. Most officers wear

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<sup>23</sup>Martha Summerhayes, Vanished Arizona, (Salem, Mass.: Salem Press, 1911, reprint of 2d ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 70. Mrs. Summerhayes is the principal chronicler of dependents and garrison life on the Arizona frontier; Army and Navy Journal, 14 (August 12, 1876), 4, as quoted in Utley, Frontier Regulars, 77.

<sup>24</sup>1872 Regulations, 11.

approved styles of the dress uniform, although some are seen wearing the four-button sack coat specified for fatigue duties. Normally, formal occasions such as these required wearing epaulets, not shoulder straps. The noncommissioned officers' uniforms are correct in every detail, and reflect the revised regulation of 1861.<sup>25</sup>

Thursday's men wear dark blue shirts with the correct shoulder straps and chevrons. Some of the shirts have bibbed fronts, commonly called miner's shirts. The men also wear suspenders over their shirts. The regulations at that time called for a single-breasted sack coat to be worn over a gray flannel undershirt. Even though the coats were unlined for summer use, the Arizona heat probably forced some to remove them. While most photographs show plain and bib-front shirts as outer garments during the eighties, the same photograph of the Fifth Cavalry mentioned earlier clearly shows troopers wearing light-colored suspenders over dark blue shirts. In no case, however, does one find an example of rank worn on the shirt as depicted in the film. Although Thursday correctly points out "exposed galluses" do not conform to the

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<sup>25</sup>Film still, FC, B.18, f.6, 7. The officer dress uniform consisted of a dark blue frock coat that extended two-thirds to three-fourths the way to the knee. It was single-breasted for company grade and double-breasted for field grades. A variation of this coat was short-waisted and referred to as a "shell jacket." The company grade coat had a single row of nine buttons. Major Generals wore two rows of nine buttons in groups of three. Adjutant General's Office, Regulations for the Uniform and Dress of the Army of the United States, 1861. (Washington, D.C.: George W. Bowman, 1861); repr. in Jacques Noel Jacobsen, Jr., comp. and ed., Regulations and Notes for the Uniform of the Army of the United States, 1861 (Staten Island, N.Y.: Manor Publishing, 1978).

regulation of the day, photographic evidence establishes they were actually worn. Ford's only shortcoming here would be the suspender "uniformity" among the troopers.<sup>26</sup>

In several scenes, Sergeant Major O'Rourke wears a dark blue vest with a single row of buttons. This vest was authorized for officers, but Ernest Reedstrom in his study of the Seventh Cavalry asserts the vest was worn by sergeants as well. He further states fancy watch chains and ornaments were worn with the garment. This describes O'Rourke's attire completely. O'Rourke also wears the appropriate Congressional Medal of Honor for the time.<sup>27</sup>

The popular image of the frontier cavalry is also tied to the prominent yellow-striped campaign trousers. The striped cavalry fatigue pants in the 1870s were full-length, light blue trousers worn stuffed into the boots. Uniform tailoring on the frontier was available, but was an expensive luxury. This could explain why so many photographs of the period show full cut trousers instead of the film's nicely tailored pants. The width of the stripe indicated, in general terms, one's rank as well as pattern. Privates in the film are correctly depicted without stripes on their trousers. Ford also correctly uses double stripes on the bugler's

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.,; Film still, FC, B.18, f.7, 8; Holmes, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Photograph and description in Ernest L. Reedstrom, *Bugles, Banners and War Bonnets*, (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Publishers, 1977; repr., New York: Bonanza Books, 1986), 159; Film still, FC, B.18, f.5, 9; Photograph in David Nevin, *The Soldiers*, Old West Series (New York: Time-Life Books, 1975), 124.

trousers. He might have gotten this idea from artist Charles Schreyvogel's double-striped bugler. All the evidence indicates the campaign pants in the film belong to the 1872 pattern.<sup>28</sup>

Footwear completed the uniform ensemble. The troopers' boots during the seventies generally had flat heels and square toes, rose fourteen to seventeen inches, and were square cut across the back. They certainly did not sport zippers as seen in one film still. Fort Apache's troopers generally wear their cavalry spurs improperly. Only with the dress uniform do they correctly wear the spurs low on the boot or shoe.<sup>29</sup>

**The Accouterments.** Ford's soldiers wear Civil War period waist belts with the brass belt plate of 1851. The troopers also wear the Hagner pattern, infantry, or Dyer cartridge boxes. The holsters and saber straps also date from the Civil War. All of these items were in use on the frontier in the 1870s. Unfortunately, none of the men wear the carbine

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<sup>28</sup>Steffen (Vol. II, 100) states the trousers were only worn inside the boots on campaign. As a result, they needed to be large enough to wear over the boots for parade or drill; Reedstrom, 158; S.E. Whitman, The Troopers: An Informal History of the Plains Cavalry, 1865-1890 (New York: Hastings House, 1962), 192-93; Film still, FC, B.18, f.6, 25.

<sup>29</sup>Film stills, FC, B.18, f.1, 2c; B.18, f.7, 8; B.18, f.1, 18b; The Eaves Costume Manufacturing Corporation sent Argosy 1861 and 1872 patterns of enlisted mens' uniforms and accouterments. Thomas Geoly, New York, to Katherine Spaatz, Culver City, TL, 8 May 1947, FC, Correspondence, January-June 1947, B.2.

sling that was standard issue at the time.<sup>30</sup>

One of the many cavalry "icons" in Fort Apache is the saber. The viewer sees one in almost every scene. They are worn for post duties and brandished during charges against the Indian. When they are not worn, they are visible hanging on a wall. In actuality, the most likely place for the saber was on the wall. Frontier regulars of the time found the cavalry saber noisy, awkward, and added unnecessarily to their field equipment. Its practicality against the Indian was doubtful; most troopers preferred to kill their opponent from longer range. Evidence from the Little Bighorn confirms Whitman's view: "When the troops went into the field, those long established weapons of the service were left to decorate the barracks." Some of the sabers carried on campaign in the film are attached to the left side of the saddle as prescribed by 1872 regulation; many are not.<sup>31</sup>

The Springfield carbines used by Thursday's troops are 1873 models. His regiment would have been issued the new carbine by late 1874 if the Fifth Cavalry's experience was similar to the Seventh's. Ford's cavalymen apparently do not have the same problems with the new weapons that other regiments had. The single-shot Springfield was notorious for unreliability in the field. Heavy use and poor copper

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<sup>30</sup>From exhibits at the United States Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas.

<sup>31</sup>Whitman, 178-79; Steffen, Vol. II, 159, 163; Film still, FC, B.18, f.2, 4d.

cartridges would cause extractor problems. As late as 1876, Custer's men at the Little Bighorn still had to pry the jammed cartridges out with knives. As a result, many men would discard the weapon in favor of the revolver. The longer Springfield rifle would occasionally be modified into the shorter carbine. Difficult to distinguish from an original carbine, one of these nevertheless appears in the film. Spencer carbines or Henry repeating rifles are not used in the picture. This is surprising, since the Spencer was the primary weapon of the cavalry prior to 1873, and officers were known to have obtained either the Winchester 73 or old Henrys.<sup>32</sup>

The Colt .45 revolver was the most reliable, and preferred weapon of the frontier "constabulary." This is the handgun used in Fort Apache. Prior to 1874, the regulars were primarily equipped with the Colt, Remington, or Starr .44 caliber revolvers. In 1874 the army began issue of the single-shot Colt .45's, but like the carbines, soldiers kept the older model pistols for their personal use. The film gives no examples of this practice.<sup>33</sup>

The selection of weapons illustrates Ford's practice of filming his vision of reality. In 1949, Frank Nugent wrote an article about Ford for The Saturday Evening Post. While

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<sup>32</sup>Film still, FC, B.18, f.3, 9; Reedstrom, 246-58; Kenneth M. Hammer, The Springfield Carbine on the Western Frontier (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, n.d.), passim.

<sup>33</sup>Reedstrom, 259-65; Steffen, Vol. II, 154-55.



it is never stated, the scriptwriter mentioned is undoubtedly Nugent, and the film in question is Fort Apache.

In one script a writer referred to a Sharps repeater.

"I like the sound of 'Winchester repeater' better," Ford said.

"But they didn't have Winchester repeaters at this period," the writer protested.

"Very well," said Ford, eying the ceiling. "Leave 'Sharps' in the script . . . but it's going to sound mighty like 'Winchester' on the sound track!"<sup>34</sup>

**The Equipment.** The flags and guidons of cavalry troops in the west embellish the romantic military image. Several discrepancies show themselves in Fort Apache, along with important accuracies. First, the regimental "standard" is incorrect for the time. It is too large, and the background color, according to army regulations of 1863, should be blue with yellow fringe. The yellow background was not ordered until 1887. The spread eagle emblem is also a contemporary design. There is a striking resemblance between Ford's standard and the standard of the Seventh Cavalry in the late 1940s. Second, although the film's Stars and Stripes has the correct number of stars, the flag was not officially authorized for use in the field until 1895. Some units, like the Seventh, ignored the regulations and continued to carry guidons of the Stars and Stripes well into the seventies, but

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<sup>34</sup>Nugent, 98.

these were swallow-tailed, not rectangular. Lastly, the guidons in the film do not show the regimental number, and display the troop letter in the wrong location. The film does, however, accurately show the colors cased during the march and the use of a headquarters flag.<sup>35</sup>

During the nineteenth century, former soldiers were easily recognized by their horse furniture. The gear was unique to the cavalry and provides the researcher important clues to authenticity. Fort Apache uses authentic cavalry equipments in most cases, but errs in the correct pattern for the time period portrayed. The horses (which have no "U.S." or regimental brands) seem content enough using the Model 1909 curb bit instead of the Model 1859 curb bit used throughout the seventies. The bridle is a civilian affair rather than military. The saddlebags and the carbine boots are no older than 1885. Although Ford uses authentic McClellans, they are Model 1904 saddles. The preponderance of later model horse equipments is not too surprising given the excellent condition of the equipment in the film, the scarcity of older items, and

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<sup>35</sup>From the Revised U.S. Army Regulations, 1863 Standards and Guidons of Mounted Regiments, para. 1468, as quoted in Reedstrom, 125; Lawrence A. Frost, The Custer Album: A Pictorial Biography of General George Armstrong Custer (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1964; repr., New York: Bonanza Books, 1984), 75; Reedstrom, 125-27; Milo M. Quaife, Melvin J. Weig, and Roy E. Appleman, The History of the United States Flag (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 91; Randy Steffen, The Horse Soldier, 1776-1942: The United States Cavalryman: His Uniforms, Arms, Accoutrements, and Equipments. Volume III, The Last of the Indian Wars, the Spanish-American War, the Brink of the Great War, 1881-1916 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 51-52.

the large surplus of government equipment after the demise of the horse cavalry between the two World Wars.<sup>36</sup>

Army wagons appear frequently during Fort Apache.

Martha Summerhayes describes one of these vehicles in 1874:

A comfortable large carriage, known as a Dougherty wagon, or, in common army parlance, an ambulance, was secured for me to travel in. This vehicle had a large body, with two seats facing each other, and a seat outside for the driver. The inside of the wagon could be closed if desired by canvas sides and back which rolled up and down, and by a curtain which dropped behind the driver's seat.

When Lieutenant O'Rourke offers Thursday and Philadelphia the use of his ambulance, it is not a Dougherty wagon, but rather a modified coach of some sort. The escort wagons in the film are actually later variations of an 1878 model and saw use through the First World War. Since the film is in black and white, the wagons' paint scheme cannot be determined. One does notice, however, the absence of prescribed military markings.<sup>37</sup>

**Army Life.** Travel to army posts in the Southwest during the 1870s was an ordeal. Harsh climate, poor transportation, and constant danger (real or perceived) made the long

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<sup>36</sup>Steffen, Vol. II, 163; Steffen, Vol. III, 215, 222, 36-38, 191; Film stills, Ford Collection, 8.18, f.3, 2, and 8.18, f.3, 9; From specimens in the United States Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas.

<sup>37</sup>Summerhayes, 46-47; Steffen, Vol. II, 202-207; From specimens in the Frontier Army Museum, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Film still, FC, 8.18, f.2, 3a.

trip a miserable experience. Mrs. Summerhayes and the Thursdays travelled only part of the way by ambulance.

For it must be remembered, that in 1874 there were no railroads in Arizona, and all troops which were sent to that distant territory either marched overland through New Mexico, or were transported by steamer from San Francisco down the coast, and up the Gulf of California to Fort Yuma, from which point they marched up the valley of the Gila to the southern posts, or continued up the Colorado River by steamer, to other points of disembarkation, whence they marched to the posts in the interior, or the northern part of the territory.

Martha would sympathize with the Thursdays' uncomfortable trip by stagecoach. Any rest, even at Ma McBean's Hassayampa stage stop, would be a welcome respite. Crude by any standard, McBean's is an excellent example of accommodations for travelers in Arizona at that time. Mrs. Summerhayes recalled a similar stop: "At about noon we reached a forlorn mud hut, known as Packwood's ranch . . . the place had a bar, which was cheerful for some of the poor men . . . ."38

Owen Thursday, however, frets about more than just the physical discomfort of the stage. A successful division commander during the Civil War, brevet Major General Thursday sees a regimental command at Fort Apache as a callous banishment: "Blast an ungrateful War Department that sends a man to a post out here . . . after all I've done and been to be shunted aside like this." His experience is not unique. Many senior commanders were faced with separation or reduction in

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<sup>38</sup>Coffman, 262; Summerhayes, 20, 53-54.

rank after their units were demobilized after the war. The years of high rank, reputation and success were the high mark of many military careers in the nineteenth century. In 1867, the Department of Arizona Commander, Irvin McDowell, spoke of his officers in his annual report:

Coming out of a war of immense proportions in which many of them have borne a prominent and distinguished part, having passed through all the excitement which it created, they want rest, and the service in Arizona is peculiarly fatiguing and disagreeable. Many look upon the very act of being sent there as a punishment.<sup>39</sup>

The film treats the brevet issue at length. Brevetted officers were plentiful at this time; many were conscious of the fact and reminded others of it. Thursday, however, replies to York's reference to his former rank by saying, "I'm not a general, Captain. A man is what he's paid for--I'm paid in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel." Captains York, Collingwood and Sergeant Major O'Rourke also held brevet ranks during the Civil War. Many times brevets could create problems of command, as Thursday realistically points out to York: "You may have commanded your own regiment in the late war, but so long as you command a troop in mine, you will obey my orders."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Coffman, 217-221.

<sup>40</sup>Whitman, 123; The brevet issue may have been overworked in the script. A sequence that did not appear on the screen has Collingwood preparing to attend the Non-commissioned Officers' Dance. His dress blouse has lieutenant colonel shoulder straps (attached over seven years ago) and he has to change insignia. Script, Fort Apache, 124, FC, B.5, f.7.

Another significant aspect of the officer corps at this time was its closure to former Confederates. In the film, Sergeant Beaufort is a former Confederate major who (realistically) joined the enlisted ranks of the Union Army to continue a military career. Thursday reflects the attitude of those who could not forget the last war when he refers to Beaufort as a "rebel."<sup>41</sup>

The reduction of the post-Civil War army left many officers in the same age group, with little hope for advancement. In many cases the only chance for a higher billet in the regiment was through casualty replacement. A good example of this unfortunate system reveals itself in Captain York's promotion to regimental commander after Thursday's death. The rank structure of Thursday's regiment is significant. Ford offers one lieutenant colonel, several captains and two lieutenants. Even with the reduction, there would have been at least one major on post. Records indicate the Fifth Cavalry had four such officers assigned at this time.<sup>42</sup>

Life at a frontier garrison was firmly rooted in Victorian customs and military traditions. The imperatives of military service, however, always took priority. As Mrs. Summerhayes put it, " . . . however much education, position and money might count in civil life, rank seemed to be the one

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<sup>41</sup>Coffman, 219.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 223, 231; Heitman, 71-72.

and only thing in the army . . . ." This tradition accounts for many aspects of life in the closed communities of the frontier posts, and created a unique code of conduct. Fort Apache gives the viewer a glimpse of this lifestyle in several ways.<sup>43</sup>

Although Thursday's arrival does not result in the common practice of quarters redistribution (called "bricks falling," or "ranking out"), the film takes great care on small points of military courtesy and decorum. The sequence where Michael leaves his card at Thursday's quarters reflects the use of cartes de visite popularized during the Civil War. No evidence exists, however, to substantiate York's reference to the regulatory use of a "silver salver." The first written procedures for calling cards ostensibly appear in Officer's Guides shortly after the turn of the century.<sup>44</sup>

Ford made it a point to have his officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men correctly addressed. Evidence suggests he relied upon Katherine Spaatz to correct some discrepancies in Massacre that found their way into the script. The scene in Sergeant Major O'Rourke's quarters also shows attention to detail when the Sergeant Major reminds

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<sup>43</sup>The army novels of Captain Charles King give excellent insight into the non-combat side of the frontier military. Oliver Knight, Life and Manners in the Frontier Army (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 60; Summerhayes, 80.

<sup>44</sup>James A. Moss, Officer's Manual (For Use of Subalterns) (Springfield, Mass.: F.A. Bassette Company, 1906), 246, 296-300.

Thursday his uninvited presence is against army regulations. Even then, Thursday affords the proper courtesy to Mrs. O'Rourke in the style of the times. Throughout the film the colonel displays the traits of a Victorian gentlemen by using words and phrases such as "bespeaking" and "I call it to your attention." His West Point background reveals itself when he mentions former cadets Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart to his classmate, Captain Collingwood.<sup>45</sup>

If Thursday is unhappy with his regiment's appearance, he should be equally dissatisfied with their drill. During the first troop movement, York commands, "C Troop, by two's, by the right flank, trot, ho!" The regulation would have required, "C Company, two's right, March. Trot, March," or "By the right, by two's--trot. March. The resulting positions of the company officers and the guidon in this movement are also incorrect. The last troop movement is the operation against Cochise. Since the regiment is so small (four companies), Thursday properly maneuvers it as a battalion. His "Column of four's, first troop, four's left" is close to the regulation. He omits the command of execution ("March") and his company officers consistently use incorrect

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<sup>45</sup>T[atty]. Spaatz to Katherine Clifton, TL, 21 June 1947, FC, Correspondence, January-June 1947, B.2; T. Spaatz to Katherine Clifton, TL, 20 July 1947, FC, Correspondence, July 1947, B.2; Whitman, 125, 122-123; Budd, 298, 68-69.



words of execution. When the column halts, the listener hears "squadron" instead of the correct "battalion."<sup>46</sup>

There are a significant number of foreign-born soldiers in Fort Apache, with the largest proportion belonging to the Irish. Six out of ten character names at Appendix A reflect foreign origins, and the count is even higher for Nugent's character sketches. This proportion is very reasonable for the frontier army in the 1870s. According to Coffman, almost fifty percent of the army's recruits were foreign-born during the first ten years after the Civil War. In Fort Apache, Ford uses Sergeant Major O'Rourke to continue the stereotype of the tough and paternalistic senior non-commissioned officer.

It was a fine sight to see these old men on muster or monthly inspection. Erect and soldierly, with his red face glistening, his white hair cut close, his arms and accouterments shining, not a wrinkle in his neat-fitting uniform, nor a speck of dust about him, his corps badge, and it may be a medal, on his breast, he stood in the ranks among the others like an oak tree in a grove of cottonwood saplings.<sup>47</sup>

Martha Summerhayes tells her readers the officers of Camp Apache primarily engaged in drill, courts martial, instruction and other military duties. Although officers (such

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<sup>46</sup>A revision of Upton's Infantry Tactics and the Tactics for Artillery and Cavalry was prescribed in General Orders, No. 6 on 17 July 1873. The author uses this revision as it appears in the pocket-sized manual, United States Army Cavalry Tactics (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887), 184, 309.

<sup>47</sup>Coffman, 330; From George A. Forsyth, The Story of the Soldier (New York, 1900) 131-32, as it appears in Utley, Frontier Regulars, 23-24.

as Lieutenant O'Rourke) instructed, the responsibility for recruit training fell to the sergeants.<sup>48</sup>

Just as the film depicts, veteran sergeants in the seventies were faced with volunteers woefully lacking in training. Two-thirds of those recruits came from the Mounted Recruiting Service, while others enlisted directly in units at posts. The lack of initial training was never solved, and the Inspector General reported in 1873 that the week or two of depot training produced men that still knew "nothing of the use of arms, or even the position of a soldier." Ford's humorous vignette on recruit training is not only accurate, but gives the viewer a glimpse of time-honored rites of passage unique to the military. Finally, neither veteran nor recruit conducts marksmanship practice in the film. While this omission is probably coincidental, it is perfectly in the spirit of the times. As late as 1877, many units still did not have target practice on a regular basis.<sup>49</sup>

While many probably claimed training recruits drove them to drink, most of the frontier regulars who did so simply sought escape from boredom. Those who drank heavily spent most of their scarce wages for whatever alcoholic beverage was available. This image of the hard-drinking soldier is recreated in Fort Apache. Sergeants Mulcahy, Shattuck,

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<sup>48</sup>Summerhayes, 87.

<sup>49</sup>Coffman, 329, 336, 279; Utley, Frontier Regulars, 24.

Quincannon, and Beaufort are the culprits who are driven to drink by simple thirst (Ma McBean's place); preparation for an arduous campaign (the Noncommissioned Officers' Dance); and even a heightened sense of duty (the "destruction" of unauthorized whiskey at the reservation store). As to the former, Mrs. Summerhayes stated, "I could never begrudge a soldier a bit of cheer after the hard marches in Arizona, through miles of dust and burning heat, their canteens long emptied and their lips parched and dry." Neither could Thursday, apparently, for he buys them all drinks from the bar. The reservation store incident, on the other hand, results in the sergeants' temporary incarceration and reduction in rank.<sup>50</sup>

Fort Apache champions the importance of regimental esprit de corps. This spirit is embodied in York's speech to the newspapermen as the ghostly images of the slain cavalrymen ride by:

They're living right out there, Collingwood and the rest. And they'll keep on living as long as the regiment lives. The pay is thirteen dollars a month, their diet beans and hay. Maybe horse meat before this campaign is over. [They] fight over cards or rotgut whiskey, but share the last drop in their canteens. [The] faces may change, the names, but they're there, they're the regiment. The regular army. Now, and fifty years from now. They're better men than they used to be. Thursday did that. He made it a command to be proud of.

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<sup>50</sup>Don Rickey, *Forty Miles a Day on Beans and Hay: The Enlisted Soldier Fighting the Indian Wars* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 200; Summerhayes, 53-54.

Officers at this time remained in the same regiments for many years until lineal promotion allowed advancement by branch instead of seniority. Even Martha Summerhayes recalled the "feeling of regimental prestige [that] held officers and men together." This sense of belonging had a way of nurturing itself generation by generation. Charles M. Hough, an infantry officer's son, reminisced about the parades he saw at Camp Douglas in the early 1870s: "Even a boy of twelve could and did instantly share that stolid regimental organizational feeling." Many army parents encouraged their sons to follow that tradition. In Fort Apache, Sergeant Major O'Rourke reminds Michael that the army and the regiment are "your world, and your mother's world, and my world."<sup>51</sup>

Regimental tradition notwithstanding, Philadelphia soon learns frontier life is as demanding for her as for her father. She, like many of the women who participated in the gala life of the Eastern army establishment, has no concept of frontier soldiering. Dependents or new army brides soon found that conditions in frontier garrisons were extremely harsh, and as the newly-married Martha Summerhayes came to remark, "I fell to thinking: was the army life, then, only 'glittering misery,' and had I come to participate in it?"<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 88; Charles M. Hough, "Memoir," typescript in the University of Colorado Library, 102, as it appears in Coffman, 317; Coffman, 332; Budd, 299.

<sup>52</sup>Summerhayes, 38.

Philadelphia shares her misery with several other women at the fort. Interestingly, the army at that time did not officially recognize the officer's wives and families, but it did allow post commanders to provide for them by rank. The army also barred enlistment of married men to discourage enlisted wives on post. These attempts were unsuccessful, however, and an exasperated Inspector General commented in 1874 that the forts were "sometimes overrun with the wives of enlisted men." They, like their officers' counterparts, relied on the good nature of the post commander for sustenance and shelter. The army's policy was not lost on the wives. Mrs. Summerhayes summed it up nicely when she said, "In the Army Regulations, wives are not rated except as 'camp followers.'" Even with these kinds of obstacles, military dependents like Philadelphia were a plucky group, and many came to love the service as dearly as their sponsor. As Elizabeth Custer remarked, "...we army women feel especially privileged, because we are making history...and we're proud of it."<sup>53</sup>

A wife's love for soldiering could be severely tested by the condition of the quarters at frontier posts. The wood-framed quarters Philadelphia finds at Fort Apache did not exist until almost a decade later when General Sherman recommended their construction. In 1874, the officers' quarters

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<sup>53</sup>Coffman, 308-309; Katherine Gibson Fougera, *With Custer's Cavalry* (Caldwell, Idaho: 1942), 137, as it appears in Coffman, 297.

at Camp Apache were log cabins, built near the edge of a deep canyon. By regulation, the Thursdays would have had significantly larger accommodations than the others. The film supports this by showing an upstairs portion not seen in other quarters.<sup>54</sup>

Ford creates an environment for his garrison women very much like the "one big family" of Mrs. Custer's regimental experience. When Philadelphia complains about her sparse, unfurnished quarters to "Aunt" Emily Collingwood, the older woman calls upon Mrs. O'Rourke for help. Martha Summerhayes remembers someone very much like Mrs. O'Rourke:

Mrs. Patten was an old campaigner; she understood everything about officers and their ways, and she made me absolutely comfortable for those two lonely months. I always felt grateful to her; she was a dear old Irish woman.

While help from other officers' wives was common, the military caste system of the time made fraternization between officers' wives and soldiers' wives unlikely. Nevertheless, the commander's quarters were nicely decorated and furnished by the end of the day with objects loaned and "acquired." The Summerhayes family experience was amazingly similar:

Two iron cots from the hospital were brought over, and two bed-sacks filled with fresh, sweet straw, were laid upon them; over these were laid our mattresses. We untied our folding chairs, built a fire on the hearth, captured an old broken-legged wash-stand and a round table from somewhere, and that was our living-room. A pine table was found for the small hall, which was to

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<sup>54</sup>Brandes, 12; Summerhayes, 76.

be our dining-room, and some chairs with raw-hide seats were brought from the barracks, some shelves knocked up against one wall, to serve as a side-board. . . . A cooking-stove and various things were sent over from the Q. M. store-house . . . . [Their striker] hung up my Fort Russell tin-ware, and put up shelves and stood my pans in rows, and polished the stove, and went out and stole a table somewhere . . . . Mrs. Dodge of the Twenty-third Infantry, who was about to leave the post, heard of my predicament, and offered me some china plates and cups . . . .

While their home gradually took on a more comfortable look, Martha and her husband were reminded of their status when they

dined at Captain Montgomery's (the commanding officer's) house; his wife was a famous Washington beauty. He had more rank, consequently more rooms, than we had, and their quarters were very comfortable and attractive.

Martha could have been describing the dinner scene at the Collingwood's.<sup>55</sup>

Even though Philadelphia (and Martha) had a functioning kitchen, neither knew how to use it. Ford could have used Martha's confession as dialogue for Philadelphia:

Of course, like all New England girls of that period, I knew how to make quince jelly and floating islands, but of the actual, practical side of cooking, and the management of a range, I knew nothing.

Not surprisingly, these middle-class women of the nineteenth century expected servants to perform these chores. Even in the most isolated posting, many women still had servants. When civilians were unavailable to provide these services,

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<sup>55</sup>Coffman, 289; Summerhayes, 18, 77-78, 81; Film still, FC, B.18, f.7, 17.

soldiers filled in to augment their meager pay. Although Congress passed an act in 1870 barring soldiers as servants, the practice was still alive at Camp Apache in 1874. In Fort Apache, the Mexican girl Guadalupe ably serves the Thursdays, even with her broken English. Unfortunately for Mrs. Summerhayes, her Mexican girl "...was quite young and very ignorant and stupid, and spoke nothing but a sort of Mexican 'lingo,' and did not understand a word of English."<sup>56</sup>

The drudgery of family life on the frontier was counterbalanced by moments of happiness and amusement. In one of the film's closing scenes, York greets young Michael Thursday York O'Rourke and introduces him to the newspapermen as the newest member of the regiment. The film does not specify, but one could assume the child was the first such "new recruit" from an officer's family. Once again, the experiences of Martha Summerhayes mirror the character of Philadelphia as Summerhayes relates: "In January our little boy arrived, to share our fate and to gladden our hearts. As he was the first child born to an officer's family in Camp Apache, there was the greatest excitement."<sup>57</sup>

Amusement at the post took on many forms. Singing, playing the guitar, fiddle, or harmonica were the most common. Since formal entertainment was proportionate to the size of

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<sup>56</sup>Summerhayes, 15; Coffman, 301, 306; Summerhayes, 98-99.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 97.



the garrison, dances, theatricals, and band concerts were not uncommon at the larger posts. In Fort Apache, the Washington's Birthday and Noncommissioned Officers' dances are realistically rendered. Although Camp Apache did not have a post hall in 1874, it was common practice to clear a barracks to serve as a dance hall. Ford's hall is strikingly similar to Fort Whipple's:

Around the walls, draped with flag and guidon, and glittering with sabre and scroll-work, were interspersed dozens of lamps with polished reflectors. Candles and kerosene furnished all the illumination.

Ford's dance on Washington's Birthday is accurate, as are the presence and uniforms of the regimental band. The director stated, "The Grand March in Fort Apache is typical of the period--it's a ritual, part of their tradition. I try to make it true to life." When Thursday dances with Mrs. O'Rourke, he conforms to the realistic practice of exchanging partners with the ranking noncommissioned officer. Once again Ford gives the audience authentic Americana. The music for the Grand March is St. Patrick's Day in the Morning; it was popular during the Civil War and no doubt heard for many years afterwards. One might feel two dances in a single film was excessive on Ford's part. In actuality, some posts, like Camp

Supply in the Indian Territory, held bi-monthly dances in the early 1870s.<sup>58</sup>

As Ford stated, he used music in his films to create an aura of authenticity. If one were stationed with the Fifth Cavalry at Camp Apache, one would expect to hear at least a chorus or two of The Young Dragoon (Old Fifth Cavalry Song), as it appeared in the West Point Scrapbook of 1871. This is not the case in the film, however, since the regiment is never identified. What the listener does hear are choruses of The Regular Army, Oh! and strains of The Girl I Left Behind Me. The first song was popular throughout the army at the time, and was finally published in New York City in 1874. The second tune was the regimental song of the Seventh Infantry, but had an enormous following throughout the rest of the frontier army. Even Martha Summerhayes recalls the tune being played shortly after a funeral. In many cases, the bands would play The Girl I Left Behind Me as cavalry regiments left on campaign against the Indian. Ford's image of the wives watching their men depart to the melody of this song is not only melancholy, but accurate as well. For Elizabeth Custer

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<sup>58</sup>Rickey, 188-92; Bogdanovich, 86; Coffman, 264; Knight, 133, 136; Thomas C. Railsback and John P. Langellier, The Drums Would Roll: A Pictorial History of US Army Bands on the American Frontier 1866-1900 (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1987), 17; St. Patrick's Day in the Morning (arr. by Grafulla), as featured in Eastman Wind Ensemble, Frederick Fennell, cond., Music of the Civil War (Rochester: Eastman School of Music, n.d., Mercury Records SRI 2-77011); Rickey, 198.

and the women of the Seventh Cavalry, the song would forever be associated with grief and loss.<sup>59</sup>

Ford offers the audience another song through Sergeant Quincannon. Doctor Wilkens arranges his release from the guardhouse long enough to serenade the Collingwood party with Sweet Genevieve. One of the three most popular songs in 1869, Sweet Genevieve continued to be one of the most successful sentimental ballads through 1890.<sup>60</sup>

Music and dance were not the only forms of recreation available. Early in the film Michael and Philadelphia go horseback riding off the post. Although Philadelphia violates the Victorian custom of riding sidesaddle, riding was a common form of recreation at the frontier garrisons, and therefore true for the time.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Edward Arthur Dolph, "Sound Off": Soldier Songs From Yankee Doodle to Parley Voo (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1929), 554-55, 6-9, 507-09; Franklin G. Smith, dir. of music, Military Music in America, Vol. III: The Army in the West, 1870-1890 (Washington, D.C.: Company of Military Historians), n.d.; Summerhayes, 31; The Girl I Left Behind Me was known as early as 1759-70 but did not appear in print until 1808. It was either Irish or was adapted from the English Brighton Camp. Its popularity in the Army grew during the Civil War. Roger Lax and Frederick Smith, The Great Song Thesaurus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 218; Budd, 459; Coffman, 298.

<sup>60</sup>David Ewen, American Popular Songs From the Revolutionary War to the Present (New York: Random House, 1966), 472; In the script, the Collingwoods were to be serenaded by mariachis. Dan Ford relates his grandfather loved mariachi music and would hire a band to accompany him through town on his trips to Mexico. Ford must have been torn between his beloved mariachis and the music of his ancestors. The tune most appropriate for the Irish Sergeant Quincannon was obviously chosen. Script, Fort Apache, 63, FC, B.5, f.7.

<sup>61</sup>Coffman, 296.

**Fighting The Indian.** The cavalry's nemesis in two of Ford's three films is the Apache Indian. One writer suggests that as a group, the Apaches have been "glorified by historians, glamorized by novelists, and distorted beyond recognition by commercial film-makers." This historical analysis, hopefully, remains impartial; distortions by Ford should reveal themselves.<sup>62</sup>

According to Michael Budd,

There are two types of Indians portrayed in [Ford's] films. The first attacks whites treacherously and, in the context of the film, unjustifiably. These are usually faceless, unspeaking savages. The second type only attacks justifiably, and desires peace while being capable of war.

In Fort Apache, these two "types" are shown in the characters of the renegade Diablo and the Chiricahua chief, Cochise. According to Martha Summerhayes, Arizona in the 1870s was "a country infested with roving bands of the most cruel tribe ever known, who tortured before they killed." In fairness to the Indian, Arizona was also a harsh land that supported only hardy people, be they red or white. The film has examples of both.<sup>63</sup>

The first Indian mentioned in Fort Apache is a renegade Apache named Diablo. In the film, he leaves the

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<sup>62</sup>Keith H. Basso, ed., from the notes of Grenville Goodwin, Western Apache Raiding and Warfare (Tucson: University of Arizona Press: 1971), [9].

<sup>63</sup>Budd, 437; Summerhayes, 66.

reservation and kills two cavalrymen. When his band attacks the subsequent burial detail, Thursday counterattacks and defeats them. History shows Diablo was a chief of the White Mountain Apaches who lived with his people on the reservation at Camp Apache during this time. According to contemporaries, some of the band did conduct raids into Mexico, but they avoided conflicts with American troops. Although Diablo is never seen in the picture, Mrs. Summerhayes found him to be a friendly Indian of noticeable good looks. Other evidence corroborates this. During an early army survey, it was Diablo who suggested the future location for Camp Ord (later to become Camp Apache)! His White Mountain band were so amenable, they provided the first Apache scouts for General Crook's expedition against other Apaches in 1871.<sup>64</sup>

The principal Indian character in Fort Apache is Cochise. Based upon the historical leader of the Chiricahua Apaches at this time, Cochise is rendered as a desperate leader forced off the reservation to save his people from starvation and degradation. Not seeking war, he is still capable of inflicting severe punishment if forced to fight. In historical fact, Cochise and his band lived on the Chiricahua Reservation beginning in 1872. With the exception of a few splinter groups, he and his people remained there until

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 82; Basso, 101, 20-21, note 15, 305; Photograph from the National Archives as it appears in Thrapp, between pages 112 and 113; One of these early scouts was the future mystic, Nakaidoklini. Ibid., 99.

his death on 8 June 1874 and their relocation to the San Carlos Agency on 12 June 1876.<sup>65</sup>

In 1874, Cochise would have been approximately fifty years old. In 1870, he was described as

Five feet nine and one-half inches high; . . . weight 164 pounds; broad shoulders; stout frame; eyes medium size and very black; hair straight and black . . . ; scarred all over the body with buckshot; very high forehead; large nose, and for an Indian straight.

Ford's Cochise wears enough clothing to render assessment of his forehead and body scars impossible. All other attributes, however, fit the film character precisely. In the film, Cochise speaks Spanish using Sergeant Beaufort as his interpreter. The real Cochise did speak Spanish and, in one instance, used another Apache named Ponce as an interpreter. General Oliver O. Howard described the chief exactly as Ford portrayed him:

I observed upon ordinary occasions he showed courtesy and simplicity, but, as the Chiricahua chief, when in council or mounted, leading his tribe, if Apache wrongs were touched upon, he was terribly severe in aspect.

Ford's Cochise reveals his severity to Thursday when he threatens to kill ten whites for every Apache killed. In

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<sup>65</sup>Faulk, 169-172; Cochise was considered at the heart of all the trouble in Arizona by some officers like Lieutenant Howard Cushman of the Third Cavalry and later, George Crook. Neither officer met Cochise in battle. Thrapp, 66; For a discussion of the Howard-Cochise treaty see Howard's My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians.

reality, Cochise told General Howard in 1872, "I have killed ten white men for every Indian slain . . . ."66

Ford's vision of the chief apparently conflicted with Frank Nugent's:

'I see him standing straight against the sky line, one hand clutching his pipe and pressed against his chest---'

'Wait a minute,' protested the hapless writer, who had spent seven weeks at Ford's orders on period research. 'The Apaches never used pipes. They smoked cigarettes rolled with corn husks at first, then with Mexican corn paper.'

Ford listened patiently, then resumed in the same tones, 'I see Cochise, standing straight against the sky line, one hand pressed to his chest . . . that hand he may have a flute, he may have an ax, I don't give a damn what he has . . . But he isn't smoking any cigarette!'

There must have been some conciliation later on Ford's part. The viewer sees Cochise holding a blanket over his arm and the other chiefs with Winchesters across their chests.<sup>67</sup>

During the meeting between Thursday and Cochise, Sergeant Beaufort also introduces Satanta, Alchise and Geronimo. Satanta was indeed a chief at this time, but of the Kiowas, not the Mescalero Apaches. Alchise was a chief of the White Mountain band, but 1872 found him scouting for General Crook, not on the warpath with Cochise. Crook's chronicler,

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<sup>66</sup>There are no known photographs of Cochise. His description is based solely on written accounts: *Arizonian*, Vol. I, No. 3 (Fall, 1960), 24, reprinted from the *Weekly Arizonian* of September 17, 1870 as it appears in Thrapp's footnote, 14; Howard's descriptions of Cochise was similar with these exceptions: he was six feet tall, had large eyes, and a few gray hairs. Oliver O. Howard, *My Life and Experiences Among Our Hostile Indians* (Hartford, Conn.: A. T. Worthington & Co., 1907, repr., New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1972), 205; Film still, FC, B.18, f.3, 16; Howard, 189, 205, 208.

<sup>67</sup>Nugent, 98; Film still, FC, B.18, f.3, 16.

John Bourke, describes the Indian as "a perfect Adonis in figure, a mass of muscle and sinew, of wonderful courage, great sagacity, and as faithful as an Irish hound." There is no doubt Alchise was courageous; he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for the Apache campaign of 1872-73. The last Apache Beaufort introduces is Geronimo. At this time he is a medicine man, but later his renegade actions force York's regiment to pursue him throughout Arizona. In this case Ford achieved the ultimate in typecasting. The character of Geronimo was portrayed by the legendary Apache's grandson.<sup>68</sup>

From 1865 to 1890 the American army was tasked to protect the frontier of white civilization moving west into Indian lands. Conflicts naturally occurred, and only over time did the military come to learn how to effectively fight the Indian. Military victories usually resulted in removal of the Indian to a reservation and forfeiture of his traditional lands. Meanwhile, a highly inefficient, but occasionally well-meaning Indian Bureau in Washington struggled with Indian affairs from the non-military point of view. The Bureau supervised policy, treaty obligations and the reservation system. By the end of the 1870s, however, mismanagement

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<sup>68</sup>The Peace Policy following the Camp Grant Massacre in 1871 required all Apaches to live on four designated reservations. The relocation was not totally successful, and Crook was forced to campaign against the Tonto Apaches: Basso, 21-22; John G. Bourke, *With General Crook in the Indian Wars* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Lewis Osborne, 1968), 40; The chief's name has also been spelled Alchesay, which is probably an Anglicized pronunciation. Capps, photograph and text, 80; *The American West of John Ford*, transcript, 32, FC, B.8, f.10.



and corruption within the Indian Bureau had risen to scandalous proportions. Agents on the reservations cheated their charges by shortchanging beef rations and selling illegal items (such as whiskey) to make a profit. Generally, the Indian would tolerate these injustices as long as raiding off the reservation offset the shortages. When survival of the tribe became the issue, whole groups would leave the reservation.<sup>69</sup>

Ford gives the viewer an accurate picture of the corrupt Indian agent during the early seventies in the character of Silas Meacham. Meacham is a blend of pious (Quaker?) intentions toward his Indian "children" and pure profiteering through the illegal sale of guns and whiskey. York summarizes the circumstances that drive Cochise from the reservation:

Meacham here was sent by the Indian ring, the dirtiest, most corrupt political group in our history. And then it began--whiskey but no beef, trinkets instead of blankets, the women degraded, the children sickly, the men turning into drunken animals. So Cochise did the only thing a decent man could do. He left, took most of his people, and crossed the Rio Bravo into Mexico.

The local agent at Camp Apache in 1874 was James E. Roberts. Martha Summerhayes found him particularly despicable. She could have been describing Meacham when she said,

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<sup>69</sup>Coffman, 254; For an excellent discussion of the prevailing situation during the seventies, see Utley's *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984).

And of all the unkempt, unshorn, disagreeable-looking personages who had ever stepped foot into our quarters, this was the worst. Heaven save us from a Government which appoints such men as that to watch over and deal with Indians . . . .

Martha was so disgusted with Roberts she refused to allow him in her home. She lamented, "it was never my good fortune to meet with an Indian Agent who impressed me as being the right sort of a man to deal with those children of nature."<sup>70</sup>

According to Coffman, most military authorities tolerated the baser elements of society on the frontier as "sordid facts of life." Owen Thursday, however, does not tolerate Meacham's actions and has the agent's illegal guns and whiskey destroyed. Thursday could well have been executing the intent of his "real" commander at that time, George Crook, who fought to keep the Indian agents honest. Thursday and York, like other officers of the nineteenth century, recognize the merit of avoiding trouble by treating the Indians fairly. Their efforts are lost on Meacham, who, like other civilians of the 1800s, held the army in low esteem. The agent's use of "soldier boy" in the film reflects this attitude. Only Meacham's status as a government representative prevents Thursday from taking further action.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Budd, 408; Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Secretary of the Interior for the Year 1874 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1874), 287; Summerhayes, 89.

<sup>71</sup>Coffman, 313; Faulk, 172; Coffman, 256-57.

Claw Springs Indian Reservation could very well represent the Fort Apache Agency of the 1870s. An Apache of the time, John Rope, stated the local agent at Fort Apache [Roberts] was responsible for conditions [in 1875] resulting in general unrest and tribal killings. Roberts was also at odds with Major Frederick D. Ogilby at Camp Apache. Ogilby felt the agent had lost control of the situation and Roberts felt the military was usurping its authority. The Chiricahua Apaches, meanwhile, had been living on their own reservation under the auspices of agent Thomas J. Jeffords. Jeffords had learned their language and won the lifelong friendship of Cochise. Unlike the film, Cochise honored his agreement and remained on the reservation until his death in 1874.<sup>72</sup>

Indian warfare in the seventies was characterized by few large battles but numerous small engagements. From 1865 to 1890, army records list a thousand engagements with 948 losses. During its three years in Arizona, the Fifth Cavalry had ninety-seven engagements. The rule in most cases was a lot of shooting, but few, if any, casualties. Guerrilla tactics such as cutting the telegraph line in Fort Apache did occur, and breaks were hard to find. In this case, Fort Apache did have a branch telegraph line, but the first

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<sup>72</sup>The Department of the Interior's "program of removal" in 1874 called for concentrating all Western Apaches at San Carlos. The killings at Fort Apache and Crook's departure from Arizona allowed Clum to begin the transfers from Fort Apache. New warfare broke out and forced Crook's return in the early eighties. Basso, 102; Thrapp, 166-67; Faulk, 169-171.

Congressional appropriation for telegraphic communication in the Southwest was passed in 1875. The telegraph would not yet have been in place as depicted in the film.<sup>73</sup>

Many officers in the post-Civil War army had no previous experience fighting Indians. Some, like Owen Thursday, had been sent to Europe as military observers. These officers, fresh from the Old World where wars were still waged by gaily-plumed armies, saw the Indian as "an object of curiosity and, depending on the man and the situation, of fear and contempt." Several incidents show Thursday's contempt and lack of knowledge of his adversary. In his office he refers to Apaches as "digger Indians" and picks up a warrior's headband with a pencil. Later, he insults Cochise by sitting during the negotiations and verbally assailing the chief. Captain Charles King of the Fifth Cavalry described a character in one of his novels who, like Thursday, knew "about as much of Indian strategy as he did about Sanscrit [sic], and [he] was a man that couldn't be taught."<sup>74</sup>

The American army never developed a formal Indian warfare doctrine, nor did it publish guidance for those in the field. Owen Thursday, like other Cadets at West Point, was versed in the Napoleonic school of moving large columns of

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<sup>73</sup>Coffman, 254; George F. Price, comp., *Across the Continent With the Fifth Cavalry* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1883; repr., New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959), 152; Whitman, 175.

<sup>74</sup>Coffman, 254-55; Budd, 68-6; Thursday saw Cochise as merely a means to achieve greater glory. His attitude reflected that of Lieutenant Cushing in 1870. Thrapp, 72; Knight, 85.

infantry and cavalry tied to long supply trains. The tactics used on the frontier were gained through experience or word of mouth. Unfortunately for the Indian, he occasionally chose to stand and fight on the white man's terms, and was usually defeated. This only reinforced the "legitimacy" of the old school and hampered progress toward developing appropriate tactics. Thursday represents most officers of the day in his attitude that military strategy is found on library shelves and practiced only by the Great Captains such as Bonaparte. Refusing to believe the uneducated Apaches could conduct credible military operations, he seals his fate. He proposes to split his force, charges a distant dust cloud with no enemy in sight, and finally advances in column into certain ambush. If Thursday had read the classics more closely, he would have also learned the importance of knowing one's enemy.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to underestimating his adversary, Thursday makes other errors in judgment. Regulations called for executing the charge in a series of gait changes, namely, from walk to trot to gallop to charge. Thursday bypasses the intermediate gaits and insures fatigue of his horses. His close formation is incorrect as well:

In charging the enemy in column of companies or platoons, the subdivisions of each column charge successively, and at such distance from the one preceding as to support it promptly, or to enable

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<sup>75</sup>Utley's Frontier Regulars, Chapter 3, provides the best discussion of the Army's lack of doctrine on the frontier; Utley, The Indian Frontier, 166-70; Budd, 67, 486.

it, if repulsed, to clear the flanks of the column and reform in its rear.

Thursday's last error, equally grievous, is his failure to have a sufficient reserve as specified by regulation.<sup>76</sup>

In Fort Apache, Thursday never uses an Indian scout and never listens to York, his most experienced Indian-fighter. York gives him the same advice a scout named Joe Felmer gave others in 1870: "When you see Apache 'sign,' be keerful; 'n' when you don' see nary sign, be more keerful." In reality, everyone in General George Crook's Department of Arizona waged an unorthodox war against the Apaches. Crook discarded the accepted tactics of the time, and built a fast, lean striking force using Apache scouts to track and fight Apaches. Thursday's large supply train is the complete opposite of Crook's small, mule-provisioned units, and the colonel never considers reconnaissance at all. Bourke sums up Thursday's failure:

Unless the fullest use were made of scouts to the manner born, thoroughly posted in the minutest details of the country, able to detect the slightest mark on the trail and to interpret it correctly--in short, unless savage should be pitted against savage, the white man would be outwitted, exhausted, circumvented, possibly ambuscaded and destroyed.

These costly tactical errors remind one of those committed by other officers (such as Custer) in the 1870s.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Cavalry Tactics, 233, 339.

<sup>77</sup>Thrapp, 66; Faulk, 171-72; Bourke, 44.

The Apaches were fearsome and savage enemies during a fight. Bourke describes an ambush:

There were hot embers of the new wagons, the scattered fragments of broken boxes, barrels, and packages of all sorts; copper shells, arrows, bows, one or two broken rifles, torn and burned clothing. There lay all that was mortal of poor Israel, stripped of clothing, a small piece cut from the crown of the head, but thrown back upon the corpse...

Even without describing the rest of the carnage, this could well have described the ambush of the two troopers in Fort Apache and kept faith with Bellah's vivid descriptions. The scene in the film, however, could not have been as realistically rendered. The Motion Picture Association of America specifically directed filming so "as to make certain that the scene be not unduly gruesome." Even the battles between the cavalrymen and Indians were to "be shot in such a way as to not come through too realistically gruesome."<sup>78</sup>

A final observation on Indian tactics shows inconsistencies as well. All of the action in the film occurs during daylight hours. When Jack Summerhayes tells his young wife the Apache usually attacks just before daylight, but never at night, he is not far from the truth. The basic

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<sup>78</sup>Thrapp, 65; Joseph I. Breen to John Ford, Hollywood, 22 July 1947, 2, TLS, FC, Correspondence, July 1947, B.2; Strict censorship finally came to Hollywood in 1934. When revenues began dropping off, studio executives asked Will Hays for help. Hays established a Production Code Administration and entrusted it to Joseph I. Breen, a young Catholic newspaperman. If a film failed to gain the Administration's "Purity Seal" or otherwise violated the Code, the studio could be fined \$25,000, suffer condemnation by the Roman Catholic National Legion of Decency, and possible boycott by Catholics at the box office. The "Breen office" controlled the motion picture industry until the early 1960s, and was responsible for a significant lack of "realism" in films during the forties and fifties. Boller and Davis, 195.

Apache strategy was to send out scouts to locate the target, surround it in full force during the night, and then kill as many as possible during an early morning ambush. Fort Apache has every Indian mounted, with firearms, and boldly attacking during the day. Many of these warriors were not mounted, and did not require horses; the Apaches prided themselves on their ability to run long distances on foot. Likewise, the bow and arrow was still the predominant weapon. Although older rifles and some pistols were used, availability of ammunition limited their use. The preponderance of Winchester repeating rifles, Ford's view notwithstanding, is unrealistic. The Apaches did not have these rifles in such quantity within a year of manufacture. Photographs as late as 1886 actually show the Chiricahuas with Springfield rifles and carbines. Unlike the film, the same photographs show the Indians with painted faces.<sup>79</sup>

**Summary.** Fort Apache was John Ford's attempt to mirror life at a frontier army post in the 1870s. To accomplish this, his writers conducted significant research for characterizations, locations, events and army life. Even though Frank Nugent fashioned fictitious characters with historically believable careers, only small portions of those

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<sup>79</sup>Summerhayes, 72; Basso, 17-18; George S. Shaeffer and National Archives photographs as they appear in Thrapp, between pages 240 and 241.



careers come to the screen; Thursday's similarity to George Armstrong Custer is the most striking.

The film's fort does not resemble the real Camp Apache in layout or construction. Ford chose to film his action sequences in a more breathtaking environment than eastern Arizona could offer. The arid beauty of Monument Valley accentuates the remoteness of the post but does not represent the actual area of military operations.

Although the film never discloses its cavalry regiment, comparison with the Fifth Cavalry has the fewest historical conflicts. Neither the Fifth nor any other unit in Arizona, however, suffered a military defeat on the scale depicted in Fort Apache.

Uniforms, accouterments and equipment are generally correct, but suffer from significant discrepancies. The majority of uniforms obtained for the film correctly represent army patterns of 1861. Of all the weapons represented, only the saber is correct for the assumed period. Most of the horse equipments and all of the army wagons are from a later period.

Ford achieves his most accurate portrayals when he treats the army as a profession and depicts life on a frontier post. Promotions, brevet ranks, training, and customs and courtesies are all faithfully presented. Social functions, recreation, and the "army family" are also historically accurate.

Ford's depiction of the Indian suffers from chronological and characterization problems. A notable exception is his sensitive and accurate portrayal of Cochise. Evidence shows Ford embraced his vision of the Indian in lieu of history.

Overall, John Ford successfully accomplishes his goal of accurately depicting the frontier army. The shortcomings in the film still err on the side of believability and are probably transparent to the average viewer. In this case, he has printed a legend based heavily on fact.

### CHAPTER 3

#### SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON

*Don't apologize, Mister--it's a sign of weakness.*

**Preproduction.** The second film in the Ford cavalry trilogy continues the collaboration between Ford and Cooper's Argosy Pictures Corporation and RKO Radio Pictures. The screenplay was written by Frank Nugent and Laurence Stallings. James Warner Bellah wrote the film treatment from his original Saturday Evening Post short stories, War Party and Big Hunt.<sup>1</sup>

The Argosy Personnel List of 1947 shows Katherine Clifton repeating as Story Editor and Katherine Spaatz conducting research. The film's technical advisors were Cliff Lyons and Philip Kieffer. Since the story unfolds in 1876, Ford probably drew upon the previous research from Elizabeth Custer's books (see chapter 2). Additional research, however, included the reports and aftermath of the Custer defeat as they appeared in the New York Tribune from 7 to 11 July 1876.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bellah is credited with story and adaptation on the shooting script. FC, B.5, f.16; Other titles considered were The Great Herd, Buffalo Hunt, Brittles U.S.A., Forward, Long Knife, War Party, War Dance, Buffalo Dance, Ghost Dance, and Yellow Scarf. FC, B.5, f.19; James Warner Bellah, War Party, Saturday Evening Post, 19 June 1948, 22-3, 104, 107, 109-110; James Warner Bellah, Big Hunt, Saturday Evening Post, 6 December 1947, 22-3, 199, 201-2, 205.

<sup>2</sup>Correspondence, November-December 1947, 2, FC, B.2; Research notes on Custer defeat, FC, B.5, f.19.

John Ford, however, had special plans for She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. He had long admired western artists Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell. He felt drawn to Remington's portrayal of the cavalryman and Russell's use of color. Riding the crest of Fort Apache's success, he saw the opportunity to bring the flavor of their work to the screen. Although Ford preferred working in black and white, that medium would not do justice to these images. As a result, this film was the only one of the three shot in color. Ford told his biographers,

She Wore a Yellow Ribbon with the Remington and Charlie Russell background demanded color. [It was] made for audience appeal.

I like She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. I tried to copy the Remington style there--you can't copy him one hundred percent--but at least I tried to get in his colour and movement, and I think I succeeded partly.

As a result, preproduction research primarily focused on art. Cinematographer Winton Hoch and Art Director James Basevi were at Ford's side during the process.

We tried to get all the Remington sketches and portraits and I studied them and I tried to get his action in to the picture. It wasn't exactly Remington it was also Charlie Russell. Matter of fact it was more Charlie Russell than Remington. I studied these pictures and tried to copy them. Of course with the cavalry stuff, that was mostly Remington.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Harold McCracken's Frederic Remington: Artist of the Old West and Bernard DeVoto's Across the Wide Missouri influenced the film. When one sees "Pvt.

B. DeVoto" carved on a wooden cross in the cemetery in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, there remains little doubt of Ford's source.<sup>3</sup>

Harold Von Schmidt could have influenced Ford as well. His illustration of Bellah's Day of Duty in the Saturday Evening Post in 1948 was titled Stampeding Horses Through Indian Camp. Ford's stampede is remarkably similar.<sup>4</sup>

**The Story.** She Wore a Yellow Ribbon opens with news of the Custer massacre being sent across the West. Rebellious Indians attack a Third Cavalry paymaster's wagon and kill the paymaster. The action cuts to Fort Starke and the quarters of Captain Nathan Brittles, a forty-year veteran. Sergeant Quincannon joins him, and the two men discuss the sergeant's drinking habits as well as their upcoming retirements. Sergeant Tyree returns with the paymaster and his wagon. Tyree identifies the killers as Southern Cheyenne Dog Soldiers.

Throughout the story, Lieutenants Flint Cohill and Ross Pennell vie for the affections of Olivia Dandridge, a young woman visiting from the East. One squabble ends with Brittles escorting Olivia to her quarters. That evening,

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<sup>3</sup>John Ford interview, "Westerns," 7-8, FC, B.11, f.32; Bogdanovich, 86; Dan Ford, 229; John Ford interview, *ibid.*, 3; Howze, 15-17, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Reed, 137.

Brittles visits the graves of his wife and daughters. He tells his wife of the death of Custer's men and of his imminent retirement. As he is leaving, Olivia gives him a gift of flowers.

The next morning, Major Allshard, the post commander, orders Brittles to escort Mrs. Allshard and Olivia to the stagecoach station at Sudro's Wells. Olivia does not have the temperament for life on the frontier and is returning to the more sedate East. Brittles protests their presence will hinder his patrol, but is overruled by Allshard. Once on the trail, they observe a large body of Arapahos and drastically alter their route to avoid a fight and protect the women.

Brittles sends Tyree ahead to the station to hold the stagecoach for the women. Meanwhile, a wounded Corporal Quayne arrives with the Paradise River patrol. They have been ambushed by Red Shirt and his Cheyennes. Dr. O'Laughlin convinces Brittles to further slow his march to operate on the badly wounded Quayne.

The column finally arrives at the station, only to find it under attack. They drive off the Indians, but the stagecoach has been burned and several people are dead. After a brief funeral service, Brittles orders his men back to the fort. Enroute, Brittles, Tyree and Pennell observe Rynders (the sutler) and some gunrunners trading rifles and whiskey to Red Shirt. The Indians obviously dislike Rynders' terms, for they torture the traders and take the rifles. To protect

Fort Starke, Brittles leaves Cohill's men to block the river crossing until relief arrives.

Back at the fort, a disgusted Brittles reports his final patrol is a total failure. When he asks to mount a relief column for Cohill, Major Allshard reminds him of his retirement the next day. The major points out Pennell must relieve Cohill. The next morning, Pennell and the men of C Troop present Brittles with a silver watch as a token of appreciation. Brittles tricks Quincannon into a fight with other troopers to get the Irishman thrown in the guardhouse. This insures the sergeant will not jeopardize his own upcoming pension through some error in judgment.

Brittles leaves the fort, but rides to help Cohill and Pennell. The Captain and Tyree enter the Indian camp, and while Brittles talks to his old friend, Chief Pony-That-Walks, Tyree locates the Indian pony herd. After dark, the troopers attack the Indian encampment and drive off the ponies. The Indians are forced to walk back to the reservation and the fort is saved from attack. Brittles then departs for California, but is intercepted by Tyree, who has Brittles' promotion and appointment as Chief of Scouts. The two men arrive at the fort during a dance, but Lieutenant Colonel Brittles forsakes the merriment to visit his family's grave site.

**The Characters.** She Wore a Yellow Ribbon seeks authenticity through reference to actual officers of the time.

When word of the Custer disaster reaches Fort Starke, and later during a sequence in the cemetery, Brittles mentions specific names of officers who perished with the Seventh Cavalry. At the end of the film, the names of Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip H. Sheridan are mentioned as endorsing Brittles' orders. Robert E. Lee is also mentioned. None of these figures appears in the film and the other characters are fictitious.

The picture gives some insight into the career of its principal, Nathan Brittles. Appropriately named for an aging cavalryman, his career spans forty years. His past military actions include Chapultepec, Bull Run, Shiloh, and Gettysburg. Brittles is currently serving his last days in the frontier cavalry of the mid-1870s. From the historical events described later in this chapter, Brittles could represent Captain Anson Mills, Third Cavalry. Brittles' subordinate and friend, Sergeant Quincannon, has served with him throughout the years. Their deep-felt affection for one another springs from the shared dangers of war.<sup>5</sup>

First Lieutenant Flint Cohill has served nine years in the cavalry. A seasoned officer of proven ability, he will be given command of the troop upon Brittles' retirement.

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<sup>5</sup>The Third Cavalry did fight at the Battle of Chapultepec, Mexico during the Mexican War. History of the Third United States Cavalry, 1846-1933, 29, from the United States Cavalry Museum Library, Fort Riley, Kansas.



Based upon clues in the film, Cohill represents Lieutenant George W. Cradlebaugh, West Point class of 1867.<sup>6</sup>

Second Lieutenant Ross Pennell, however, has only four years' experience. At the beginning of the film he seeks separation from the army and return to his former wealthy pastimes in the East. During the course of the story he decides to stay in the service. The lieutenant's real life counterpart could have been Lieutenant James Allen (Company C), West Point class of 1872.<sup>7</sup>

**The Places.** The fictional Fort Starke presents major problems with respect to location. Ford leads the viewer to believe the post is somewhere in the Southwest. Historical evidence suggests three other, more believable locations.

Using the Indian as a clue, the film depicts specific Southern Plains tribes. A warrior band of Southern Cheyennes leaves a reservation north of the post. Ford also shows Indians living around Fort Stark, which could indicate the fort controls its own Indian Agency. The Southern Cheyenne-Arapaho Reservation in 1876 was located in the western portion of the Indian Territory (present-day

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<sup>6</sup>Adjutant General's Office, General Order No. 69, 22 July 1867, Index of General Orders, 1867 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1867), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup>Adjutant General's Office, General Orders No. 77, 29 July 1872, Index of General Orders, 1872 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 1-2.

Oklahoma). The only agency to the south of this reservation and the first possible location for Starke is Fort Sill.<sup>8</sup>

The case for the second location is based upon Ford's use of C "Troop", Third United States Cavalry. This company was stationed at Fort McPherson, Nebraska, in 1876 and conducted operations against the Cheyennes that year. Records indicate a small group of Southern Cheyennes and Arapahos lived with the Sioux at the Red Cloud Agency to the north of Fort McPherson, and participated in the Custer fight.<sup>9</sup>

Fort Starke's appearance argues for the last and most likely location. Evidence indicates Ford patterned his fort's design after Alfred Jacob Miller's Fort Laramie and Interior of Fort Laramie as they appeared in Across the Wide Missouri. Both paintings show Indians in and around the fort. Admitting their presence inside the fort is unorthodox, DeVoto nevertheless claims both paintings "are historical documents of primary importance." Ford undoubtedly felt these images were authentic; Starke's "blockhouse" design and Indians are too similar to Miller's paintings to be coincidental. The case becomes stronger when one discovers Katherine Spaatz

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<sup>8</sup>Butley, The Indian Frontier, illus., 264; Philip H. Outline Descriptions of the Posts in the Military Division of the Missouri, Commanded by Lieutenant General P. H. Sheridan (Chicago: Headquarters, Military Division of the Missouri, 1876; facsimile ed., Bellevue, Neb.: Old Army Press, 1964), 175.

<sup>9</sup>John S. Gray, Centennial Campaign, the Sioux War of 1876 (Fort Collins, Colo.: The Old Army Press, 1976), 347.

wired the Secretary of the Interior in 1947 to request information on Fort Laramie.<sup>10</sup>

Photographic evidence shows Fort Laramie in 1876 did not resemble the Miller painting at all. Even if Ford had known this, he would have probably dismissed it in lieu of his vision. Laramie was also not an agency, even though Indians had wintered near the fort from its earliest days as a trading post in 1834. The fort was, however, south of the Red Cloud Agency like McPherson. It was commanded by a major of Company B, Third Cavalry during the period of interest, and served as a staging base for the Powder River Campaign. When these similarities are wedded with the events below, Fort Laramie becomes the most likely setting for Ford's story. The motion picture fort was constructed on a bluff in Monument Valley. Goulding's Lodge was used as the headquarters.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Howze, 30; Bernard DeVoto, Across the Wide Missouri (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1947), Plate VIII, Plate IX; Secretary of the Interior, Washington, D.C., to Katherine Spaatz, Fort Myer, Va., TL, 14 May 1947, FC, Correspondence, January-June 1947, B.2.

<sup>11</sup>Mitchell Photo in the Fort Laramie Collections as it appears in Robert A. Murray, Fort Laramie: Visions of a Grand Old Post (Fort Collins, Colo.: Old Army Press, 1974), 156 and text, 41; Frederic Remington also did a drawing of old Fort John (Laramie) based upon a sketch by Charles B. Gillespie in 1849. Indians, tipis and blockhouses appear in this drawing as well. *Ibid.*, 124; Ford's decision to use Monument Valley again was probably reinforced when he saw Miller's eroded pinnacle, "Chimney Rock" in DeVoto, Plate I; Harry Carey, Jr. interview, 3 and 4, 7, FC, B.11, f.18.

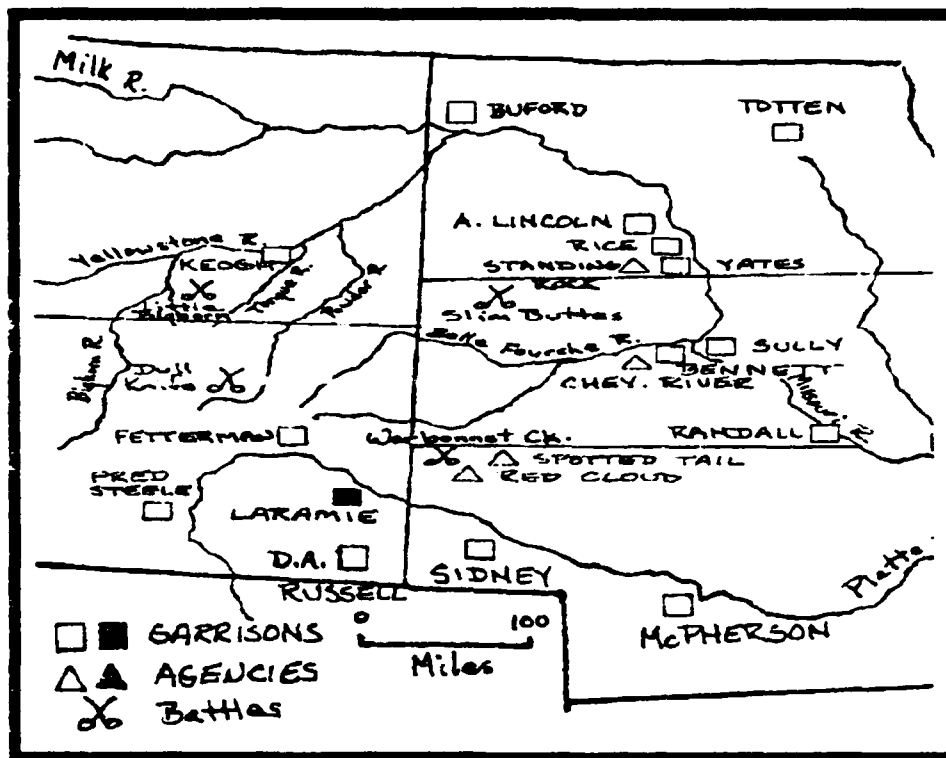


Figure 2 Probable Location for She Wore a Yellow Ribbon.

**The Events.** Ford's story unfolds immediately following the Custer defeat in June 1876. For some reason, he intentionally omits the specific month. In the shooting script, a note to the properties man indicates the month on Brittles' calendar should not be seen. Another note explains this will prevent the viewer from fixing the month as July or September. When Brittles marks his calendar, there is, indeed, no month at the top. The month in actuality had to have been November, as the first day of that month started on a

Wednesday. The film begins, then, on Monday, 6 November 1876.<sup>12</sup>

If one bases an analysis of the film on Ford's Third Cavalry, significant similarities come to light. The film never portrays the regimental commander, who at that time was Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds. His headquarters in 1876 was located at Fort McPherson--another argument supporting Fort Laramie as the film's post. In She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Major Allshard, Third Cavalry, is the post commander. In actuality, the post commander of Fort Laramie from 1 November to 31 December 1876 was a Major Andrew Wallace Evans of the Third Cavalry.<sup>13</sup>

In She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Brittles and his command successfully attack a large Indian village at night and stampede its pony herd without a single casualty. The dismounted Indians are then marched back to the reservation. Military records provide several examples of similar actions. Each action reflects different elements of the film's story line.

The first occurred on 17 July, when Colonel Wesley Merritt and Companies A, B, D, G, I, K, and M of the Fifth

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<sup>12</sup>Although the narrator states Custer and 212 men were killed at the Little Big Horn, 250 soldiers of the Seventh Cavalry actually perished. Chronological List, 61; Shooting script, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, October 16, 1948, 7, 10, FC, 8.5, f.18. The only background research found in the Ford Collection for She Wore a Yellow Ribbon consists of summaries of the New York Tribune headline stories of July 7 to July 10 which covered the events on the Little Bighorn. 1-5, 8.5, f.19.

<sup>13</sup>A History of the Third United States Cavalry, 1846-1933, 26; Murray, 97.

Cavalry intercepted a band of approximately eight hundred Indians near Hat (or War Bonnet) Creek, Wyoming. After killing one Indian and wounding another, the entire band was chased back to the Red Cloud Agency.<sup>14</sup>

The second action occurred on 9 September, when a battalion of 150 men under Captain Anson Mills of the Third Cavalry surprised American Horse's Sioux village at Slim Buttes, Dakota Territory. Mills planned his attack for just before daybreak. The attack occurred when a small pony herd stampeded through the village. Mills captured the entire village of thirty-seven lodges and 175 ponies; the battalion lost one dead and six wounded.<sup>15</sup>

On 22 October, Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie with six companies of the Fourth Cavalry and two companies of the Sixth surrounded the Sioux followers of Red Cloud and Red Leaf near Camp Robinson, Nebraska. At daybreak, the four hundred warriors surrendered peacefully, and the entire camp with seven hundred ponies returned to Red Cloud Agency.<sup>16</sup>

The last historical example during this time occurred on 24 November. Colonel Mackenzie and elements of the

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<sup>14</sup>Chronological List, 62.

<sup>15</sup>Fifteen men from each of the ten companies formed the battalion. The officers included Captain Mills, Lieutenants Emmet Crawford, A. H. Von Leutwitz and Frederick Schwatka. Fred H. Warner, *The Slim Buttes Battle, September 9-10, 1876*, 2d ed. (Greeley, Colo.: n.p., 1991), 29.

<sup>16</sup>Nell L. Pate, "Ranald S. Mackenzie," in Paul Andrew Hutton, ed., *Soldiers West: Biographies from the Military Frontier*, with an introduction by Robert M. Utley (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 185; Chronological List, 63.

Second, Third (Companies H and K), Fourth and Fifth Cavalry surprised 173 lodges of Dull Knife's Cheyennes near Crazy Woman Creek, Wyoming. At daybreak, Mackenzie destroyed the entire village and captured approximately five hundred ponies. The command lost six killed and twenty-five wounded.<sup>17</sup>

In She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, word of the Custer debacle is spread throughout the West using, among other means, the Pony Express. Unfortunately, the Pony Express had ceased operations fourteen years earlier.<sup>18</sup>

Ford presents a poignant reminder of the recent defeat when Tyree finds a Seventh Cavalry kepi left by the Cheyennes. This cinematic touch has basis in fact. Both Mills' and Mackenzie's troops found Seventh Cavalry items among captured Indian effects.<sup>19</sup>

Ford's use of buffalo is picturesque and also adds to the authenticity of the film. In the picture, the troopers find a small herd and Brittles remarks the buffalo had not been that far north since 1868. His statement is faithful to events. The herds that roamed the central part of the Great Plains were decimated from 1872-74. The slaughter left a

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<sup>17</sup> Dee Brown with Martin F. Schmitt, Fighting Indians of the West (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968, new ed., Ballantine Books, 1974) 100-101.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Newark, Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Old West (New York: Gallery Books, 1960), 197-99.

<sup>19</sup> Horses, saddles, clothing and even a guidon with Seventh Cavalry markings were found in American Horse's village. Gray, 248; Mackenzie's men found numerous Seventh Cavalry items in Dull Knife's village. Pate, *Ibid.*

great void between the animals living on the northern and southern ranges. The buffalo aspect more than any other argues against the depicted events occurring in the Southwest. Brittles was not the only soldier to observe these animals in the area. On 22 November 1876, Sergeant James S. McClellan also saw many buffalo after leaving Fort Laramie.<sup>20</sup>

**The Uniforms.** Partial credit or discredit for historical accuracy of the uniforms goes again to D.R. Overall-Hatswell, who was responsible for costume research for the film (see Appendix B). Unlike Fort Apache, the soldiers in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon would be governed by the uniform regulations of 1872. Once again an argument can be made for light-colored campaign hats. A photograph taken in 1876 shows officers of the Third Cavalry wearing hats such as these.<sup>21</sup>

As in Fort Apache, however, the troopers still wear shirts and suspenders not authorized nor generally observed until the eighties. Some men did wear suspenders prior to the

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<sup>20</sup>Tom McHugh, *The Time of the Buffalo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 274-75; From McClellan's Journal of the Powder River Expedition as excerpted in Fred H. Werner, *The Bull Knife Battle* (Greeley, Colo.: Werner Publications, 1981), 69.

<sup>21</sup>Overall-Hatswell was a former member of the Royal Navy and past Commodore of the California Yacht Club. He claimed credit as a technical advisor and designer on *Fort Apache* and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, specializing in the Indian Wars. In 1949 he was decorated with the Palmes of an Officier D'Academie by the French Government for twenty-five years effort in preserving the correctness of detail in pictures dealing with France. There is no record of a similar award for the United States. Résumé, D. R. Overall-Hatswell from 1924 to 1949, TD, 27 August 1949, FC, Correspondence, August-October 1949, B.2; Photograph from the United States Military Academy Archives as it appears in Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 324.



army issues in 1883, but not throughout the ranks as depicted. As mentioned previously, officers did not wear suspenders or shoulder straps affixed to their shirts during this period. Also, the stripes on the trousers are all incorrectly the same width.<sup>22</sup>

The dress and undress uniforms in this film, like its predecessor, are 1851 patterns as modified. While Civil War vintage uniforms were used until the nineties, 1872 pattern uniforms would have been widespread in late 1876. On the positive side, Brittles correctly wears the Medal of Honor for the period and Cohill wears the sash of the Officer of the Day.<sup>23</sup>

One uniform item introduced in this film is the greatcoat. Philip Kieffer told Carey the greatcoats were Ford creations. It is more likely Ford "borrowed" this image from Frederic Remington's "Through the Smoke Sprang the Daring Young Soldier." In this painting, troopers wearing greatcoats with yellow cape linings man defensive positions very similar to Brittles' relief of Quayne's Paradise River patrol. While the coat is accurately depicted as sky blue, the yellow lining on the capes were not specified by regulation until 1885 for enlisted and a year later for officers. Ford's soldiers do wear the capes correctly buttoned or tossed over the

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<sup>22</sup>Drawing and caption from Chappell, 39.

<sup>23</sup>For an excellent discussion of uniforms worn by 1876 cavalymen, see Reedstrom, Chapter 12.

shoulders. While the officers realistically wear the enlisted men's coats on campaign, they do not wear the prescribed rank on their sleeves. In one scene, however, Major Allshard does wear the officer's overcoat as specified by regulation.<sup>24</sup>

Soldiers were not the only ones to wear uniforms in the film. Mrs. Allshard wears a riding outfit made from "Quincannon's old britches," and Olivia wears a kepi and military-style blouse. Coffman states wives on the frontier sometimes wore their husband's regimental insignia on their caps or even wore the kepi as Martha Summerhayes does in an old photograph. The cover photograph of Mrs. Frances Roe's book shows her smartly attired in a West Point-style tunic, complete with buttons and braid.<sup>25</sup>

**The Accouterments.** In 1876, Brittles' men would now be using the Colt .45 as their standard sidearm. Unfortunately, sabers are carried to the field incorrectly on the saddles. The other cavalry accouterments in She Wore a Yellow

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<sup>24</sup>The greatcoat was dark blue for officers, double-breasted with seven buttons in each row, and had a skirt that fell half way between the knee and the foot. Because of the color difference, officers were authorized to wear the enlisted model coat during campaigns. 1872 Regulations, 17; Harry Carey, Jr. interview, 25, FC, B.11, f.18; Peter H. Hassrick, *Frederick Remington* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975), no. 32; Adjutant General's Office, *Regulations for the Uniform of the Army of the United States*, May 1899 (Baltimore: Isaac Friedenwald, 1899); repr. Jacques N. Jacobsen, Jr., comp. and ed., *Regulations and Notes for the Uniform of the Army of the United States, 1899* (New York: Manor Publishing, 1972), Introduction.

<sup>25</sup>Coffman, 296; Frances M. A. Roe, *Army Letters from an Officer's Wife, 1871-1898* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1909; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

Ribbon appear to be the same ones used in the previous film. For further discussion, see Chapter 2.

**The Equipment.** With few exceptions, equipment discrepancies in this film are described in the previous chapter. This should not be too surprising if one assumes the use of the same Hollywood equipment stocks from one film to the next. This constraint normally arises from limited budgets and supplies. Nevertheless, there is one item always available to Ford.

His penchant for tailoring history to suit his film repeats itself in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Ford had decided to use an altered stagecoach as the paymaster's wagon. James Warner Bellah took great pains to describe a real paymaster's wagon and even drew Ford a sketch. Bellah then offered to phone an army post in Kansas to have them send pictures of the wagon. Ford told Bellah he did not care what it looked like, it was going to look like a stagecoach, and then walked off. A member of the company later told Bellah that Ford always used stagecoaches in his Westerns--it was his trademark.<sup>26</sup>

As trademarks of the cavalry, the guidon, colors and regimental standard all fall short of the historical mark. Design and use are incorrect. The guidon of the Seventh

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<sup>26</sup>Bellah was probably referring to the wagon and carriage collection at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Bellah had attended the Army Command and General Staff College at the post and was no doubt familiar with the collection; James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 2, 3, FC, B.11, f.16.

Cavalry shown in the opening scene is inaccurate. The closest match to this design would be the 1885 pattern guidon. For a fuller discussion of other shortcomings, see Chapter 2.<sup>27</sup>

**Army Life.** The company of cavalrymen in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon are led by a realistic number of officers of the proper rank. On the other hand, this company is erroneously referred to as a "troop," and several of the maneuver commands do not conform to the regulations of the day. In some cases, the command of execution is either omitted or wrong; Ford continues his use of "Yo" for the command "March." Other commands, such as "Prepare to mount. Mount." are correct. The use of the terms "squads" and "sets" to denote division lower than platoon level does not fit the regulation. The smallest division of a platoon was "four's."<sup>28</sup>

If Ford is consistent, then the army is more so. When Brittles claims "the army is always the same . . . the sun and the moon change, but the army knows no seasons," he gives the viewer a realistic feel for the inertia and continuity of the military. Ford emphasizes this using a recurring theme of time spent in grade before promotion. Brittles and Cohill remind (Second Lieutenant) Pennell that he will make captain "in ten or twelve years!" Corporal Quayne's bravery

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<sup>27</sup>See appropriate footnote in preceding chapter.

<sup>28</sup>Cavalry Tactics, 203, 207, 173.

will help him make sergeant in two or three more years. The reasons for such tenure in grade were explained in the last chapter. As Coffman points out in The Old Army, "a War Department study in 1877 held out the promise of a colonelcy to new lieutenants at the end of thirty-three to thirty-seven years." Brittles' forty years service to lieutenant colonel, then, is not that incredible.<sup>29</sup>

Ford's film provides the backdrop for Brittles' retirement from a chosen way of life and community. The anticipated departure is not a happy one, and cannot be compensated even with a silver watch from Kansas City. The loss of prestige and power are significant and the prospects grim. Brittles sums up his feelings when he explains, "Captain of a troop one day, every man's face turned towards you, lieutenants jump when I growl. Now tomorrow, I'll be glad if a blacksmith asks me to shoe a horse." In reality, officers on the retirement list at that time could look forward to little more than their yearly allowance of stationery. His assignment as Chief of Scouts is a reprieve from slow death, and he rejoices in his good fortune. Once again, Ford celebrates this sense of belonging to the profession that Brittles cannot leave:

So here they are, the dog-faced soldiers, the regulars, the fifty-cents-a-day professionals, aiding the outposts of the nation. From Fort Reno to Fort Apache, from Sheridan to Stark,

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<sup>29</sup>Coffman, 234.

they're all the same--men in dirty-shirt blue, and only a cold page in the history books to mark their passing. But wherever they rode, and whatever they fought for, that place became the United States.<sup>30</sup>

These "fifty-cents-a-day professionals" came from various backgrounds. As in Fort Apache, this film treats the issue of former Confederates serving on the frontier. Like Beaufort in the preceding film, Tyree is revealed as a former Confederate officer. Unlike Owen Thursday, however, Nathan Brittles embodies the other attitude many had of their previous foes. At the grave of a former Confederate, the Yankee Brittles simply says,

Rome Clay, late Brigadier General, Confederate States Army, known to his comrades here, sir, as Trooper John Smith, United States Cavalry. A gallant soldier and a Christian gentleman.

At a funeral service following the Dull Knife Battle in 1876, the bugler sounded taps as three volleys were fired in salute to the fallen. Ford portrays this ritual exactly in the film. General Oliver Howard pointed out many men were sympathetic to their former enemies and treated them "with delicacy and kindness." Many other army veterans formed strong bonds with their southern brothers and attempted to help them personally. Ford might have had an added incentive to film this sequence.

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<sup>30</sup>Adjutant General's Office, General Order No. 101, 29 September 1876, in Index of General Orders, 1876 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1877); Official records indicate no officers retired from the Third Cavalry in 1876.

According to Frank Nugent, Ford sympathized with the Confederacy.<sup>31</sup>

The first dramatic scene in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon depicts a successful attack on a paymaster's wagon by the Indians. Tyree complains the troops will not be paid for another three months. According to Coffman, army paymasters during this period visited frontier posts every other month. This naturally stretched the soldiers' already insufficient pay to the point that desertion was not uncommon. One soldier so looked forward to pay day he described paymasters as "airy visitants of the blue ethereal suddenly to flap their heavenly wings and light among us." One can easily understand the commotion in the film, then, when the paymaster arrives dead and his funds missing. Volunteers to catch the thieves were probably plentiful!<sup>32</sup>

Ford's second film also features an Irish sergeant named Quincannon who is partial to liquor. While the reasons for imbibing remain basically the same as in the first film, Quincannon's drinking never results in drunkenness. In this case, his thirst insures his future pension from the army.

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<sup>31</sup>Werner, The Dull Knife Battle, 60; Coffman, 240; Ford admired his uncle Mike, who fought for the South during the Civil War. Nugent, 96; According to Bellah, the burial of the Confederate General was taken from another of his stories. Ford supposedly advised him not to leave things laying around-- someone would pick them up. James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 2, 1, FC, 2.11, f.16.

<sup>32</sup>Coffman, 350; An army paymaster actually died in 1876. Major Augustus H. Seward died at Montrose, New York, on 11 September. General Order No. 103, 13 October 1876, 6, in 1876 Index; Jack O. Foner, The United States Soldier Between Two Wars: Army Life and Reforms, 1865-1899 (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), 16.

The burly Irishman's brogue complements Brittles' use of words such as "chivvied" and "fisticuffs" to portray the Victorian frontier army.<sup>33</sup>

Ford offers a view of accommodations not previously seen: a bachelor officer's quarters. Brittles' rooms are realistically cramped and rustic. By contrast, the sutler's store in the film is far nicer than its counterpart at Fort Laramie in 1877. Following the lead of Fort Apache, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon again affords the viewer a realistic glimpse of a commanding officer's headquarters. The commander and his adjutant share a small room and are constantly visited by the sergeant major bearing paperwork. Hovering nearby is the orderly trumpeter waiting to sound his calls. Details such as these match exactly the descriptions given by Captain King in his novels.<sup>34</sup>

The character of Olivia Dandridge represents the many single women who visited relatives or friends on frontier army posts during this time. In the film, the yellow ribbon in her hair signifies she has a cavalry sweetheart. In the early summer of 1874, Katherine Garrett was visiting her sister who was with the Seventh Cavalry. No mention is made of a yellow ribbon, but a dashing young officer (like Flint

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<sup>33</sup>Although pensions at this time were less than extraordinary, Guineannon's had just recently been sweetened by General Order No. 19 on 1 March 1876. It established bonus pay for enlisted men who had been on continuous service since 4 August 1842 or earlier. 1876 Index.

<sup>34</sup>Murray, photograph on 157; Knight, 174.



Cohill?) did propose to her following an evening ball. She accepted and was married soon afterwards. As in the first film, Ford brings the post community together through the use of a formal dance.<sup>35</sup>

Early in the picture, Lieutenant Cohill denies permission for Lieutenant Pennell to take Olivia on a picnic. Cohill does this only in the interest of Olivia's safety, for picnicking was a favorite pastime among frontier regulars. When the picnic could be combined with fishing, it was even more enjoyable. Water was not an absolute necessity, however, as shown by a photograph of a picnic in the shade of a saguaro cactus in Arizona in 1876.<sup>36</sup>

Not all frontier life was a picnic, obviously. Part of Martha Summerhayes' "glittering misery" is revealed by Abby Allshard in Ford's second film. Bouncing along on an army wagon she relates, "I planted twenty-four gardens the first ten years of our marriage, and we never stayed long enough to see a single bloom." The military lifestyle Abby speaks of was very realistic and extremely trying.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Coffman, 297; Knight, 138; Bellah did not like the film's title. He said a yellow ribbon was the mark of a whore in the Old West. Research does not substantiate his claim. James Warner Bellah interview, Tape 1, Side 2, 3, FC, 8.11, f.16; Coffman, 297.

<sup>36</sup>Coffman, 264; Photograph from the Arizona Historical Society as it appears in Nevin, 94-95.

<sup>37</sup>Part of the shooting script that did not reach the screen paints an even starker picture. Abby tells Dr. O'Loughlin bitterly of sick babies that die from lack of fresh greens and milk. Abby has two silver candlesticks and one good tablecloth for "formal" dinners, and says the typical army wife has "a ten dollar bill in her stocking, a black evening gown in her saddlebag and a soft hand on the reins." 64, FC, October 16, 1948, 8.5, f.18.

While Ford offers only one formal dance in the film, he makes the most of period music. The listener hears the authentic She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, The Girl I Left Behind Me and Garry Owen. The first song appeared in 1838 as All 'Round My Hat; a newer version in 1917 was known as Round Her Neck She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. As mentioned in chapter 1, Ford's Uncle Mike Connolly brought the tune to his nephew's attention. The film popularized the song, and variations on the lyrics are still heard at the military academies. The last tune was an old Irish drinking song that became the famous regimental march of the Seventh Cavalry.<sup>38</sup>

Although not strictly musical, a note on bugle calls is in order. Ford uses his bugler to either transition to the next scene or sound an appropriate signal. The officers do not consistently use the bugle to relay commands. For example, when Brittles wants his men to mount their horses during a thunderstorm, he elects to yell the command instead of sounding "Mount." When the bugle is used, the correct signal is sounded for the command. Of the fourteen signals in the film, twelve of them are correct; the remaining two do not appear in the regulations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Dolph, 510-11; Ewen, 12, 333; Cadets still march to She Wore a Yellow Ribbon at West Point and the Air Force Academy.

<sup>39</sup>"Bugle call" is used here for the reader's benefit. The army at that time used the phrase "trumpet signal." Cavalry Tactics, 493-514.

*Fighting the Indian.* Ford uses the same technique of establishing authenticity using Indian names as he does with the cavalry. Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Gall and Crow King were all leaders of the Sioux in 1876. She Wore a Yellow Ribbon also portrays contrasting Indian types much as Fort Apache does. In the film, Red Shirt is a "bloodthirsty savage" who delights in torture and warfare. Research indicates an Indian named Red Shirt did live during this period. He was a Sioux, however, not a Southern Cheyenne Dog Soldier, and surrendered to Nelson Miles shortly after the fighting in October 1876. The antithesis of Red Shirt is Pony-That-Walks. He is a "wise and peaceful" tribal elder who wants peace but is helpless to stop the bloodshed. Although his character is believable, a chief such as Pony-That-Walks would have probably remained on the reservation during the hostilities of 1876.<sup>40</sup>

The threat to Fort Starke is magnified by the sutler's illegal dealings with the Indians. The scene with Rynders and the gun-runners again shows Ford's strength in the industry and his tendency to borrow freely. The Production Code Administrator, Joseph Breen, cautioned Argosy to handle some scenes "with care so as to avoid the impression of excessive gruesomeness." Breen referred specifically to Rynders

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<sup>40</sup>Photo caption, Brown and Schmitt, 100; Pony-That-Walks was portrayed by Seneca Chief John Big Tree. According to Ford, he was supposed to have posed for Frazer's *The End of the Trail* and the *Buffalo* nickel. John Ford interview, "Westerns," 9, EC, 2.11, f.32.

slashing an Indian across the face with a whip. Ford filmed the sequence without the slashing, but still had the Indians burn one of the gun-runners alive. Even Brittles thinks this is gruesome, for he offers Pennell a chaw of tobacco, which has "been known to turn a man's stomach."<sup>41</sup>

Howze feels this scene strongly resembles Harold Von Schmidt's Gun Runners, which illustrated Bellah's Big Hunt. The artist's illustrations for Bellah's War Party and Last Fight were also "recreated" in the film. Howze's argument is a strong one. Given Ford's penchant for borrowing from magazines, especially one as widely read as the Saturday Evening Post, these illustrations could have been extremely helpful to Hoch and Basevi.<sup>42</sup>

Brittles, on the other hand, concocts a rather non-violent plan to defeat the eight or nine hundred Indians that threaten Starke. By capturing their ponies at night, he forces the dismounted Indians to return to the reservation. While cavalry tactics at the time followed a similar approach, the results were very often much different. Officers such as Custer preferred to surround an enemy village and attack with multiple columns just before daylight. These columns, however, made it a point to inflict as much destruction as pos-

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<sup>41</sup>Joseph I. Green to Merian C. Cooper, Culver City, TL, 25 October 1948, 50, Correspondence, August-December 1948, 8.2.

<sup>42</sup>Howze, 11, 17; Walt Reed, 99, 103.

sible. Noncombatant deaths were merely the cost of war. This practice exemplified Sheridan and Sherman's concept of total war; it was practiced with a vengeance against the Indian.<sup>43</sup>

**Summary.** The second film of Ford's cavalry trilogy is unique. His primary goal was to bring to life the action and color of Remington and Russell using the frontier army. As a result, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon was the only one of the three pictures filmed in color. Ford's second aim was to portray the twilight of an officer's career on the frontier. Nathan Brittles universally represents the professional soldier who dreads the obscurity of retirement.

In this film more than the others, Ford shows his willingness to borrow images. He borrows his color from his friend, Charlie Russell, and his cavalry action from Frederic Remington. He draws Fort Starke from the pages of DeVoto's Across the Wide Missouri and renders the work of Harold Von Schmidt in other scenes.

For all of its images, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon accurately portrays events in 1876. While no single Indian engagement of the period completely represents the depicted military actions, taken together they faithfully reflect the story line. Ford's use of the Third Cavalry was especially significant, since that regiment figured prominently in the

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<sup>43</sup>Hutton, Phil Sheridan, 185.

campaigns after the Little Big Horn. Ford errs in his depiction of the Pony Express, but his use of buffalo truthfully represents the period and assumed location.

Uniforms, accouterments and equipment continue to suffer the same deficiencies and boast the same accuracies described in Fort Apache. Ford's use of a stagecoach as a paymaster's wagon is another example of his propensity for disregarding advice and doing things his way.

His treatment of frontier army life is historically correct and his strongest suit. The depiction of long careers with slow promotion rates is a good example. The music and bugle calls in the film are also noteworthy for their accuracy. In addition, the cavalry-Indian confrontations are believable. Ford tenders the same "good Indian-bad Indian" characterizations he presented in Fort Apache.

In sum, John Ford presents a reasonably accurate portrayal of the 1876 Third Cavalry in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Even while admirers crowed and critics harped, Ford was busy on his next project. He did not bask in accomplishments, nor apologize for shortcomings--John Ford knew it would be a sign of weakness.

## CHAPTER 4

### RIO GRANDE

*To my only rival, the United States Cavalry.*

**Preproduction.** John Ford and Merian C. Cooper continued their association in making the last film in this study. In 1950 John Wayne convinced Argosy to sign a three-picture deal with Herbert Yates' Republic Pictures. In exchange, Yates would support Ford's newest project called The Quiet Man. For his first picture for Republic, Ford decided to stick with a proven formula and use another Bellah story. Ford had an old friend, James Kevin McGuinness, do the screenplay from Bellah's Mission With No Record; Rio Grande was released in early November, 1950.<sup>1</sup>

**The Story.** The film begins as Lieutenant Colonel Kirby Yorke and his men return to Fort Starke with renegade

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<sup>1</sup>Wayne also stood to gain. He could now make quality pictures for Ford while still under contract to Republic. Dan Ford, 232-33; James Warner Bellah, Mission With No Record, Saturday Evening Post (27 September 1947): 30-31, 138, 140, 142, 144; The first draft of the screenplay was entitled Rio Bravo. Herbert Yates and his sales executives at Republic did not feel this title was 'a boxoffice [sic] title, nor [did] it lend itself to universal exploitation.' Herbert J. Yates to John Ford, Hollywood, TLS, 3 May 1950, FC, Correspondence, May-June 1950, B.2; At a later point in production, the film was titled Rio Grande Command. Herbert Yates to John Ford, Western Union telegram, October 1950, FC, Correspondence, July-October 1950, B.2.

Apache captives. General Philip H. Sheridan is waiting in Yorke's tent to discuss operations against the Indians.

Newly-arrived recruits include Travis Tyree, Daniel Boone and Jefferson Yorke, the colonel's son. Jeff has failed academically at West Point, reenlisted, and has not seen his father for fifteen years. During a talk, both reach an understanding of the other's expectations.

During horsemanship training Boone and Tyree give a "Roman-style" horse-jumping exhibition. A deputy marshal arrives from Texas with a warrant for Tyree's arrest, but Sergeant Major Quincannon denies Tyree is among his men. Another soldier insults Jeff and a fight ensues. They reconcile their differences and Jeff is accepted by the other troopers.

Kathleen Yorke arrives at the camp, surprised to find her long-estranged husband is her son's commander. She has come west to buy Jeff out of his enlistment, but neither father nor son will agree to it. After dinner, Kirby and Kathleen are serenaded by the regimental singers.

As Kathleen is visiting Jeff, Apaches attack the camp and free their clansmen. The next morning Tyree is arrested for manslaughter by the deputy marshal and Sergeant Quincannon tells Dr. Wilkins the story of the Yorkes' estrangement. During the Civil War, Yorke and Quincannon carried out Sheridan's orders to burn Bridesdale, Kathleen's family home in the Shenandoah Valley.



Meanwhile, Yorke's troopers pursue the Apaches to the Rio Grande River, where they meet a Mexican army officer. The Apaches have just defeated the Mexicans, but Yorke is powerless to follow the Indians into Mexico.

Sheridan visits Starke again and the regimental singers serenade his dinner party. Tyree explains his unjust manslaughter charge to Quincannon and Dr. Wilkins, who allow him to escape on the colonel's horse.

The next day, Sheridan orders Yorke to cross the Rio Grande and attack the Apaches in Mexico. The women and children depart for Fort Bliss and safety. Jeff is one of the escort troopers.

On the trail they are ambushed by the Apaches, who steal the children. Jeff rides for assistance, helped by the "deserter" Tyree. Tyree meets Yorke and his troops at the Rio Grande, and tells them the children are being held in a small church across the border.

With Yorke's permission, Tyree, Boone, and Jeff ride ahead and enter the church, while the Apaches dance drunkenly in the town outside. At the prearranged signal, Yorke and his men attack the Apaches and free the children. During the fight Yorke is wounded, and Jeff pulls the arrow from his father's shoulder.

The troopers are welcomed home and Boone, Tyree and Jeff are awarded medals for their actions. During the ceremony, the deputy marshal tries to apprehend Tyree, who

promptly "borrows" Sheridan's horse to make good another escape.

**The Characters.** The only military character in the film based on an historical person is Philip H. Sheridan. As the film depicts, Sheridan is a Lieutenant General and Commander of the Division of the Missouri. His portrayal by a short, stocky, J. Carroll Naish compares quite favorably to the real General's appearance. Ada Vogdes aptly described Sheridan in the early 1870s at Fort Fetterman as looking "more like a little fat Dutchman that ought to be behind a . . . beer counter than a great Genl." When Ford's Sheridan tells Yorke he barely passed mathematics at West Point, he is historically correct. The real Sheridan was an average cadet academically, but suffered in some courses. He probably would have failed his examinations if his roommate had not tutored him.<sup>2</sup>

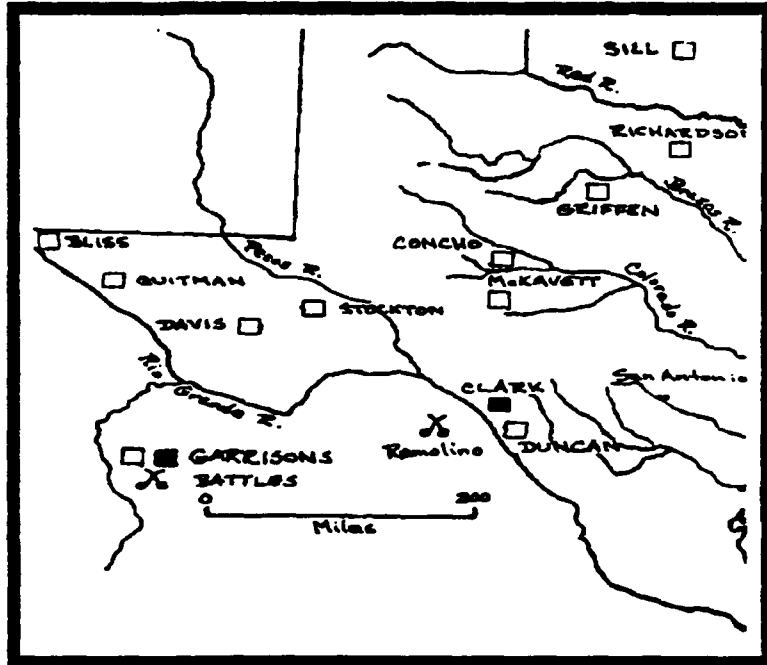
Like the major characters in Fort Apache, the fictitious Lieutenant Colonel Kirby Yorke is modeled on a "typical" officer of the period. His use of words such as "indeed" give a Victorian flavor to his character. Yorke's only known previous campaigning was during the Civil War. In

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<sup>2</sup>Hutton, 115; Coffman, 297; From the Official Register of the Officers and Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York, June 1849, June 1850, June 1851, June 1852, June 1853 as footnoted in Hutton, 5.

reality, Yorke represents Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie for reasons soon revealed.<sup>3</sup>

**The Places.** The story takes place once more at Bellah's fictional Fort Starke. Ford does not help the viewer with location and still seems transfixed with the Southwest. Since the deputy marshal is apparently from Texas and Tyree refers to past events "down in Texas," one can argue Ford is still thinking



in terms of Arizona. First, Arizona is the only known location where he conducted personal research during this period. Second, he displayed his willingness to move the Rio Grande River there for Fort Apache. Lastly, he uses Apache antagonists again in this film. As in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, the director uses a stockaded, blockhouse design for his garrison. His motion

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<sup>3</sup>Biographica[1] Sketch of Colonel Kirby York[e], from Rio Bravo production materials, May 1950, FC, B.5, f.27; The other characters in the film are fictitious as well.

picture fort was actually constructed near Moab, Utah, where most of the outside action was filmed. To match the events discussed in the next section, however, Ford's post would have to represent Fort Clark on the Texas-Mexico border.<sup>4</sup>

Fort Clark was established on 19 June 1872 at the head of Las Moras Creek, approximately eighteen miles from the Rio Grande River and 130 miles west of San Antonio. In 1876 it had a post office and was served by military telegraph, but the fort was not stockaded, nor did it boast blockhouses. The nearest railroad was at Kingsbury, 175 miles to the east. In the film, Mrs. Yorke quite correctly arrives from the east by wagon.<sup>5</sup>

The film specifies Fort Bliss as the destination for the women and children. During the time depicted, Bliss was located on the Concordia Ranch, three miles east of El Paso and approximately 450 miles west-northwest of Fort Clark.<sup>6</sup>

**The Events.** When the curtain rises on Rio Grande, Ford immediately captures frontier service in Texas in the 1870s. Yorke's weary A Troop of the Second Cavalry returns

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<sup>4</sup>No doubt Ford was influenced by the same factors as in Chapter 3; John Ford interview, 'Westerns,' 16, FC, B.11, f.32.

<sup>5</sup>'Fort Clark, Texas,' Outline Descriptions, 185.

<sup>6</sup>Frazer, 144.

from a running fight with Apaches. His subsequent complaint to Sheridan about the never-ending, fruitless chasing of renegades accurately reflects the conditions at the time.

Southwest Texas in the early 1870s was a battleground. The two forces in opposition were the emissaries of Grant's "Peace Policy" and the Kickapoo Indians. The former sought Kickapoo removal to reservations, while the Indians were drunk with the success of raiding and plundering north of the Rio Grande. As was the case throughout the frontier, the army was responsible for executing the government's policy. In 1872, the Department Commander, Brigadier General Christopher C. Augur reported:

The labor and privations of troops in this Department are both severe. The cavalry particularly are constantly at work, and it is a kind of work too that disheartens, as there is very little to show for it. Yet their zeal is untiring, and if they do not always achieve success they always deserve it. I have never seen troops more constantly employed.

Post returns from Forts Griffin, Concho, Richardson and McKavett in Texas from May to October 1873, indicate cavalry detachments constantly pursued Indian raiding parties with very little success. Zenas R. Bliss, who was assigned to Fort

Davis in 1873, also remembered the "frequent scouts after Indians who were never caught."<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of the film, Sheridan greets Yorke for the first time since the Shenandoah Valley campaign fifteen years earlier. Phil Sheridan was the Commander of the Army of the Shenandoah in 1864, but simple arithmetic would put their current reunion in 1879. As explained below, this is much too late for the depicted action. During that campaign, Yorke faithfully executed Sheridan's orders and burned Kathleen's Bridesdale plantation. The Yorkes' marriage suffered appropriately. Once again, history supports the basic story. Sheridan and his men did ravage the Shenandoah so thoroughly that he later boasted "a crow would be compelled to carry his own rations" if he travelled the valley.<sup>8</sup>

Ranald Mackenzie, like Yorke, participated in the Shenandoah campaign. He performed gallantly at Opequon Creek, Winchester, Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek. Unlike Yorke, however, Mackenzie never won the Medal of Honor.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>In Ford's letter to Thomas Dawson, previously cited, he reveals a family affiliation with this regiment as well; A.M. Gibson, The Kickapoo: Lords of the Middle Border (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 236-38; William H. Leckie, The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 105; William H. Leckie, The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), n. 49, 177; Coffman, 217.

<sup>8</sup>Hutton, 14-16.

<sup>9</sup>Pate, 178.

At a later meeting, a frustrated Sheridan orders Yorke to cross the Rio Grande River (in violation of Mexican sovereignty) and attack the Indian raiders on Mexican soil.

I'm gonna issue an order--give it to you personally. I want you to cross the Rio Grande. Hit the Apache and burn him out! I'm tired of hit and run . . . I'm sick of diplomatic hide and seek.

Phil Sheridan did "unofficially" authorize such a punitive expedition in 1873. At Fort Clark on 12 April, Sheridan, Secretary of War Belknap and Mackenzie, commander of the Fourth Cavalry, met to discuss military operations. Sheridan told Mackenzie,

I want you to control and hold down the situation, and do it in your own way. I want you to be bold, enterprising, and at all times full of energy, when you begin, let it be a campaign of annihilation, obliteration, and complete destruction....I think you understand what I want done, and the way you should employ your force.

When Kirby Yorke confirms his orders are not official, Ford's Sheridan soothes his fears:

If you fail, I assure you the members of your court martial will be the men who rode with us down the Shenandoah. I'll hand-pick 'em myself.

When Mackenzie questioned his superior about orders the General exploded,

Damn the orders! Damn the authority! You are to go ahead on your own plan of action, and your authority and backing shall be Gen. Grant and myself. With us behind you in whatever you do to clean up this situation, you can rest assured of the fullest support. You must assume the

risk. We will assume the final responsibility should any result.<sup>10</sup>

In Rio Grande, Yorke's seventy-five or so cavalymen cross the border and attack a Mexican village to recapture children seized by the Indians. History reveals Mackenzie led companies A, B, C, E, I and M and a detachment of scouts across the Rio Grande on the evening of 17 May 1873. His force totalled 267 enlisted, 18 officers, 34 scouts and 4 civilians. Mackenzie's men attacked three Indian villages at dawn near the Mexican town of Remolino.<sup>11</sup>

Ford misleads the viewer chronologically. Yorke's raid into Mexico occurs before 8 July, yet he tells his officers to prepare for a winter campaign. There is the possibility he is preparing early for this campaign. After all, he sends the women and children to Fort Bliss--450 miles away. By army escort wagon it will take them a long time to get there.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Sheridan, Belknap, Mackenzie and Commander of the Department of Texas, Brigadier General Christopher Augur held a secret meeting in San Antonio earlier that month. No record exists of the meeting, however it seems certain military action south of the border was the topic. Richard A. Thompson, Crossing the Border With the 4th Cavalry: Mackenzie's Raid into Mexico--1873 (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1986), 9; From Robert G. Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie: or, Winning West Texas from the Comanches (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), 422-23, as it appears in Hutton, Phil Sheridan, 221-22.

<sup>11</sup>Chronological List, 55; Thompson, (38-39), states these figures were derived from company and regimental records; A different figure of 360 enlisted, 17 officers, 24 scouts and 14 civilians is given in Ernest Wallace and Adrian S. Anderson, "R.S. Mackenzie and the Kickapoos: The Raid Into Mexico in 1873," Arizona and the West 7 (Summer 1965): 114.

<sup>12</sup>8 July is based upon the date of the awards ceremony in the film; At the risk of second-guessing the commander on the scene, San Antonio would have been closer and safer for the dependents (assuming, of course, they departed from Fort Clark and not elsewhere).



When Dan Ford asked his grandfather if Rio Grande was based upon a real incident, the elder Ford said,

There was such an incident. After all Pershing did it years later. I think it happened quite a few times. Nobody knew where the border was actually.

Initially correct, Ford is mistaken on the border location. There was no doubt in Texas in 1873 where the border was. One had only to ride south until reaching a very large river. When that same river mysteriously appears in Arizona in Fort Apache one sees some cinematic license.<sup>13</sup>

**The Uniforms.** D.R. Overall-Hatswell again plays Ford's man Friday for uniforms. Unfortunately, the same discrepancies found in Fort Apache and She Wore a Yellow Ribbon appear here as well. Even with mixed results on authenticity, Overall Hatswell may take solace in a few improvements. In this film, like the last, the regimental number is clearly visible on the enlisted men's kepis. One notices some of the men wearing the kepi in the field. The harsh Texas climate made this unlikely; such use is unsupported by photographs of the day.

Some of the officers realistically wear the new five-button undress coat with black braid specified by

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<sup>13</sup>John Ford interview, "Westerns," 15, FC, B.11, f.32; This author draws the conclusion Rio Grande takes place in Texas. Since Ford purposely uses Apaches again in this film, he could be thinking of the Arizona-Mexico border, which was difficult to pinpoint in those days.

regulation in 1872. Also, Yorke wears the correct Medal of Honor for the time. Captain St. Jacques wears a medal also, but it appears to be of foreign issue. Sheridan, unfortunately, wears a major general's dress coat instead of the proper coat of a lieutenant general in 1873. In a later scene, he wears trousers prescribed for regimental officers in 1861. Lastly, the sash worn by the Officer of the Day is correct for the time.<sup>14</sup>

The enlisted men are not as correctly dressed. Many wear a plain five-button sack coat instead of the plentiful Civil War four-button sack or the new plaited blouse. The only plain five-button coat worn at this time was prescribed for military storekeepers. The enlisted men were issued a five-button blouse in 1874, but it had yellow piping around the collar and on the cuffs. If one accepts the influence of Frederic Remington, the coats make sense. As in Fort Apache, the starched collar inserts and white vests are realistic for the time. Yorke's white jacket is not specified by regulation, but a variety of civilian coats were worn with shoulder straps for undress occasions.<sup>15</sup>

Once again Quincannon wears the dark blue vest and Yorke the double-breasted miner's shirt described in Chapter

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<sup>14</sup>1872 Regulations, 6; Evans E. Kerrigan, American War Medals and Decorations (New York: Viking Press, 1964), Plate I, 3-4; 1872 Regulations, 5; 1861 Regulations, Items 27, 64.

<sup>15</sup>"The Uniform for 1872-1877," 1872 Regulations; *Ibid.*, 6.

2. As in Fort Apache, the bugler sports the double stripes of a musician on his trousers, however the stripes are much wider than the authorized one-half inch.

**The Accouterments.** The cavalry saber in Rio Grande is carried in various ways. In the opening sequence, the bugler is wearing his saber on his belt. While this was acceptable wear in garrison, the saber was attached to the saddle while on campaign. When Ford's cavalrymen do attach the sabers to their saddles, they are on the far side instead of the left side, as prescribed. Luckily for Ford, Mackenzie went against the practice of the day and had his men carry sabers into the field.<sup>16</sup>

In the film, 1873 Springfield carbines are carried almost vertically in a nonmilitary rifle boot on the forward part of the saddle. Although the men wear their carbine slings correctly, the slings do not reach far enough forward to retain the weapon if the rider were unhorsed. When Jeff, Tyree and Boone slip into the church, they are suddenly armed with Winchester repeating rifles. Soldiers admired this weapon for its rate of fire and it would have served nicely in a situation such as this. In reality, Mackenzie's troopers

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<sup>16</sup>Wallace and Anderson, 112.

were armed with .50 caliber Sharps carbines as modified in 1868.<sup>17</sup>

After the Indian attack on Starke, Yorke directs Captain St. Jacques to arm his men with "two bandoliers of ammunition." Although these bandoliers are never seen, Yorke could be referring to any type of looped cartridge belt locally manufactured and commonly used by the troopers. In 1874, a formalized version called the Hazen sliding loop cartridge belt was authorized for wear on the belt.<sup>18</sup>

**The Equipment.** Ford adds a nice touch to the film by using authentic Sibley tents for his cavalry with Primus stoves sitting outside. These tents were used widely by the army in 1873. Yorke uses another common tent of the time. His two square tents are attached and pitched over a wooden floor. He uses "the fly to sit under as a porch in hot weather." The scene of Kirby and Kathleen dining together in the tent strongly resembles George and Elizabeth Custer in a similar setting.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Thompson, n. 33, 79-80. The other accouterments in the film are fully explained in the preceding chapters.

<sup>18</sup>Philip Katcher, *US Cavalry on the Plains, 1850-1890* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1987), 44.

<sup>19</sup>Although the script called for Sibley and Primus stoves, the Sibley is nowhere to be seen. Shooting Script, *Big Game*, 5 May 1950, 5, FC, B.5, f.26; Film still, *Big Game*, FC, B.19, f.2, 11; Dillon, 193; Nevin, illustrated letter, 20; Frost, 79.

The army escort wagons used to carry these tents from camp to camp also bring Fort Starke its supplies. Like Fort Apache, the wagons used in Rio Grande are later model army wagons. The more likely transportation for supplies would have been the larger army freight wagon. In the film, Mrs. Yorke and the supply wagons are probably arriving from San Antonio, which was one of the supply depots for Fort Clark.<sup>20</sup>

Ford's treatment of flags and guidons does not change in his last film. He still suffers errors in size, color, design and use. In one instance he replaces the erroneous crossed sabers emblem of the previous films with an equally erroneous "U.S." on a guidon. Ford still has the guidon bearer at the head of the column instead of the center. On the other hand, he does use a headquarters flag for Sheridan. Unfortunately, the design cannot be seen.

Ford fares somewhat better with other equipment. In at least one instance the proper Model 1859 curb bit is used. Other small items such as the tin cups and lariats attached to the saddles, along with the correct blankets under the saddles, help offset previously mentioned problems with the horse furniture.

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<sup>20</sup>Outline Descriptions, 185-86.

**Army Life.** Ford again paints a realistic picture of the profession of arms on the frontier. The soldiers' loyalty, perseverance and sense of duty are reflected in bits of dialogue. When Sheridan states the military doesn't make policy, but merely implements it, Yorke says, "I'm not complaining, sir. I get paid for it." Later, the Lieutenant Colonel echoes Captain York's sentiments in Fort Apache when he tells Jeff:

You've chosen my way of life . . . I hope you have the guts to endure it. But put out of your mind any romantic ideas that it's a way of glory. It's a life of suffering and of hardship . . . an uncompromising devotior to your oath and your duty.

Many of the frontier regulars would have agreed that cavalry drill was both a suffering and a hardship. While the drill in the film is generally correct, verbal commands do not conform to the regulations. For example, when A Company (erroneously referred to as A Troop) returns to Starke in the opening scenes, Yorke commands, "A Troop, four's right, yo. Troop halt." The correct command for the resulting movement would have been, "Right into line wheel, March. Company, Halt." Without command, the platoon leaders (officers) come forward instead of remaining in front of their respective platoons. This preponderance of officers as platoon leaders is surprising. Perhaps it is commensurate with having an officer of regimental rank commanding a single company. The cavalry in the seventies was not overly endowed

with officers; many of their functions were fulfilled by non-commissioned officers, especially at the platoon level. The subsequent commands and movements to dismount are correct. Instead of "To the left, lead out," the listener should have heard "By the left, file off, March."<sup>21</sup>

A subsequent command of "Right by two's, trot, yo" would have been more properly rendered as, "Two's right, March. Trot, March" or "Two's right, trot, March ." Later, the troopers hear the proper commands as they charge by platoons.<sup>22</sup>

The normal way to send commands was by bugle. As before, Ford's bugler remains in top form. The listener hears a total of eighteen bugle calls in Rio Grande. All eighteen conform to the regulation.<sup>23</sup>

Ford adds several minor touches to create a martial atmosphere. First, the men properly salute the regimental standard and national colors when they pass. Second, phrases such as "as you were" and "by your leave" prepare the viewer for other military courtesies. When Jeff waits for his father to properly return his salute, he is adhering to the regulations. Unfortunately, the new recruit does not realize while indoors and not under arms, he should uncover, stand at

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<sup>21</sup>Cavalry Tactics, 223, 149, 142.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 105, 157.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 405-514.

attention and not salute. Lastly, the officers and ladies at the parade pay the proper courtesy by waiting for Sheridan to be seated first.<sup>24</sup>

During the drill mentioned above, one notices the cavalymen live in tents and their horses are not stabled, but kept tied in the open. This favorably depicts the Fourth Cavalry's initial stay at Fort Clark. Six months after Fort Clark was established, the Inspector General reported the facilities were inadequate for a large command. He also mentioned the one permanent building and the canvas-covered huts that served as the other quarters. When the Fourth arrived four months later, the regiment picketed their horses and stayed in tents on the plateau south of the post.<sup>25</sup>

Recruits figure prominently in Rio Grande. When Jeff Yorke tells his father he enlisted at Highland Falls (near West Point) he is probably right. When he asserts he conducted his recruit training at Jefferson Barracks, he is five years ahead of history. In 1873 the army mounted troop depot was located at the St. Louis Barracks; it was moved to Jefferson Barracks in 1878. Jeff must have also done some clever maneuvering while enlisting. Standing over six feet

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 406, 408-09.

<sup>25</sup>From Carter's On the Border, as related in Thompson, 8.



in height, he would have never met the five-foot six to five-foot ten inch height restriction for the cavalry.<sup>26</sup>

During horsemanship training, recruits Yorke, Tyree and Boone try their hand at riding "after the manner of the Ancient Romans." This was probably not practiced on the frontier in the seventies, but a later painting by Remington in the 1890s clearly shows a cavalryman jumping with three horses. Given Ford's reliance on Remington's work to provide his images, one can see a possible connection.<sup>27</sup>

One of the intrepid horsemen, Travis Tyree, apparently had a brush with the law prior to his enlistment. His legal problem and recurring "desertions" to avoid the law are significant parts of the story. In reality, many soldiers in the frontier army only enlisted to escape the legal system or their own past.<sup>28</sup>

The desertion rate in 1873 was significant, but for generally different reasons than in the film. Ford has a short scene where Yorke tells the recruits they must do the work of ten men. "If you fail, I'll have you spread-eagled on a wagon wheel. If you desert, you'll be found . . . tracked down and broken into bits." This is stern stuff, but

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<sup>26</sup>Coffman, 336; AGO, 1873\_Index, 26.

<sup>27</sup>Most men had their hands full jumping the prescribed three-foot bars, let alone Ford's six-foot obstacle. *Cavalry Tactics*, 163-64; John Elting, *American Army Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), no. 150, 101.

<sup>28</sup>Coffman, 335.

reflects the attitudes of many officers at that time. Desertion was so widespread and incurable that officers would implement cruel punishment for those who got caught. Actually, many men deserted because of tyrannical superiors. Mackenzie, like Yorke, was a harsh disciplinarian and a tireless, unmerciful campaigner. Ironically, neither commander suffered a deserter during his raid.<sup>29</sup>

The army became so sensitive to the desertion issue that it adopted measures to allow soldiers to legally leave prior to their contract expiration. In Rio Grande, Mrs. Yorke apparently tries to take advantage of this policy when she offers to buy Jeff's enlistment for one hundred dollars. Unfortunately, she is seventeen years too early, as the policy was implemented by the Act of 16 June 1890. Not only was she too early, but she was twenty dollars short of the required fee.<sup>30</sup>

On a higher note, the regimental singers entertain General Sheridan during one of his visits. This was a common courtesy afforded dignitaries who visited the frontier garrisons. Mrs. Orsemus Boyd is the primary chronicler of post life at Fort Clark in the seventies. She wrote,

Every time an inspecting officer or one of high rank came to Fort Clark, as frequently happened, we rejoiced in the opportunity to give a ball in

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<sup>29</sup>Rickey, 145; Pate, 177; On 10 October 1873, General Orders No. 102 granted a full Presidential pardon for deserters who surrendered prior to 1 January 1874.

<sup>30</sup>Rickey, 338-39.

his honor, and the band serenaded him each night of his sojourn; in fact, nothing was lacking that would prove our hospitality and cordiality-

In fact, of the three cavalry films, Rio Grande features the most singing. True to his nature, Ford had decided prior to filming what music would be used. A script note stated that he had a specific song in mind for the singers at the General's dinner. The film features the Sons of the Pioneers as the regimental singers. Again, their selection was by no means arbitrary. It seems the lead tenor, Ken Curtis, was married to Ford's daughter at the time. Ford later admitted he wanted to give Curtis some exposure. Since Sheridan was Irish and the Irish Down by the Glenside was a Ford favorite, he featured the son-in-law and the tune.<sup>31</sup>

The rest of the film's music is a blend of traditional ballads and folk songs mixed with contemporary western tunes. The scene with troopers singing and playing guitar in the tent is historically accurate; the particular tune is contemporary. Soldiers on the frontier did hear traditional songs like Erie Canal. The haunting I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen was published in March 1876 and very likely found listeners in the west before the end of the decade. You're

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<sup>31</sup>Boyd's husband served in the Eighth Cavalry. Their first tour of duty at Fort Clark was in late 1875. Mrs. Orsemus Bronson Boyd, Cavalry Life in Tent and Field (New York: J. Selwin Tait & Sons, 1894; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 279; Rio Grande shooting script, 5 May 1950, 71, FC, B.5, f.26; John Ford interview, "Westerns," 15, FC, B.11, f.32.

In the Army Now and the remaining tunes are all twentieth century compositions used to embellish the film.<sup>32</sup>

Sergeant Quincannon's hard work managing the regimental singers' schedule obviously affects his health. In the film, he has to visit the doctor regularly for his condition which, it so happens, is only curable with alcohol. It seems Quincannon was not the only unfortunate soldier at Fort Clark with "poor health." Even with Las Moras Creek nearby, records indicate

the healthy elevation and scarcity of vegetation accounted for little malaria, and illness among the troops were attributed to errors in diet, changes in temperature, and the use of intoxicating drinks.<sup>33</sup>

After the entertainment, life on frontier posts reverted to the mundane. Ford's last film offers a glimpse of garrison life not seen in the previous ones. In this picture, Kathleen Yorke washes clothes by the river to the tune of The Irish Washerwoman and later irons Kirby's uniforms. It is highly unlikely an officer's wife during this period would do her own, or someone else's washing and ironing. These tasks belonged to the laundresses of "Suds Row" who sustained themselves or supplemented their husbands' pay by doing the post's laundry. Even though Ford errs on

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<sup>32</sup>Richard Jackson, Popular Songs of Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1976), 83-86, 270-71; You're In the Army Now originates from two tunes by Victor Ormond in 1917. Lax and Smith, 397.

<sup>33</sup>Dorman F. Winfrey, 'Fort Clark,' Frontier Forts of Texas (Waco, Tex.: Texian Press, 1966), 64.

this point, he does lightheartedly portray this aspect of garrison life.<sup>34</sup>

The women of the frontier posts escaped the daily drudgery only to face the anxieties associated with military operations. This picture again faithfully represents those anxious, waiting wives. Ford gives the viewer two scenes of women and children meeting a returning column. In this case, historical accounts add to the realism of Ford's images. When Mackenzie's troops returned on 21 May, they met an

anxious garrison, who had purposely been kept in ignorance of even our destination and, after a terrible suspense, now rejoiced at our return. Up to that time and moment no member of our families had the slightest inkling of our whereabouts, or when, if ever, we would come back.

Apparently, rumors of disaster had run wild at the post and many of the wives were very distraught. Rio Grande also presents a glimpse of garrison schools as provided for by Congressional Act of 28 July 1866. These schools were optional, however, unless the post was occupied by Negro troops. Since the Fourth Cavalry relieved the black troops of the Ninth at Fort Clark, school rooms were probably in existence as portrayed in the film.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Robert Wooster, Soldiers, Sutlers, and Settlers (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987), 64-68.

<sup>35</sup>Winfrey, 69; Foner, 25.

**Fighting the Indian.** John Ford continues his love affair with the Apaches. In the film, one the Indian prisoners is Natches---Apache leader and son of Cochise. Unlike his practice in the previous films, however, Ford does not attempt to develop his character. Instead he offers only a savage, who, according to Yorke, had three troopers staked face down on ant hills. At one point, Kathleen walks across a small bridge overlooking the stockaded enclosure where Natches and the others are held. The Indians are chanting and singing around their fires. Martha Summerhayes recalled such a scene in 1874:

Arriving at the edge of the ravine, what a scene was before us! We looked down into a natural amphitheatre, in which blazed great fires; hordes of wild Apaches darted about, while others sat on logs beating their tomtoms.

Ford finds an ally in history. His Chiricahua, Mescalero and White Mountain Apaches were not the same Kickapoos Mackenzie's men engaged in Mexico. An official description of the Fort Clark area in 1876, however, does mention other tribes and their activities.

No Indians reside in the vicinity. Raiding parties of Kickapoos from Mexico, also Lipans, Kiowas, Mescalero, Comanches, Apaches and other tribes in Mexico and Texas, often visit the vicinity on stealing expeditions.

Although not a common practice, Indians occasionally attacked garrisons like Starke. The attack on Fort Apache in the eighties is one such example. In this case, Yorke properly

deploys some of his men as skirmishers while others see to the horses.<sup>36</sup>

In Rio Grande Ford makes no attempt to hide his favorite tribe. The Indian scouts are all Navajos; one is decorated for bravery after the raid. When Yorke tells the scouts, "Yat-hey" he does so in the Navajo language. In contrast, Mackenzie used the services of the Seminole-Negro Indian scouts in 1873. They were assisted in their intelligence gathering by their Muscogee cousins who lived close to the Kickapoo villages.<sup>37</sup>

As in Fort Apache, the Indians are well armed with Winchester rifles. Luckily for Yorke's men the Indians' aim is affected by their drinking. Unfortunately for the colonel, he is wounded by an arrow from probably the only sober Indian in the town. Mackenzie's men were also fortunate. Most of the Kickapoo, Mescalero, and Lipan warriors were away when the soldiers attacked their villages.<sup>38</sup>

Raids against determined Indian foes were likely to produce casualties. When Private Heinz is killed in the film, it parallels Mackenzie's single fatality: Private Peter Carrigan. Yorke's wounded men return to the fort using the

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<sup>36</sup>Variously spelled Natchez or Naiche; Summerhayes, 90; "Fort Clark, Texas," Outline Descriptions, 186.

<sup>37</sup>Gibson, 239.

<sup>38</sup>Thompson, 57.

travois. This method of fashioning a litter was common practice when a single animal moved the wounded. Mackenzie's men were better off than his counterpart's, for Mackenzie used four mules as litters for his two wounded troopers.<sup>39</sup>

The element of surprise was essential to minimizing casualties. Like Mackenzie, the savvy Yorke approaches his objective under cover of darkness. During the action, one sees Yorke's men holding four horses when dismounted much like Mackenzie's men probably did. One cannot tell whether Yorke's men capture or stampede the Indian ponies in the film; Mackenzie's A Company captured approximately sixty-five ponies and horses.<sup>40</sup>

**Summary.** The final film in John Ford's cavalry trilogy was made to satisfy Argosy's new contract with Republic Pictures. To insure the backing of a future film, Ford used his stock company in another cavalry story by James Warner Bellah.

The only character in the film based upon an historical figure is Philip H. Sheridan. The principal character, Kirby Yorke, was fashioned from a "typical" officer of

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 59; Fourth Cavalry, United States Army 1855-1935, United States Cavalry Museum, Fort Riley, Kansas, 14.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 51, 57.



the time. He was developed from a biographical sketch such as those used in Fort Apache.

To fit the depicted events, the story must take place at Fort Clark, Texas in May 1873. Ford's fort still resembles Alfred Jacob Miller's Fort Laramie and was constructed in Utah. If one ignores the incorrect palisade and blockhouses, Ford's garrison matches the Fort Clark of 1873 very well.

Although Ford's grasp of history is hazy, the main events in the film parallel historical accounts. The story accurately relates Sheridan's destruction of the Shenandoah Valley in 1874. The nature of Yorke's orders and subsequent raid into Mexico match those of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie in 1873; the film's Second Cavalry is Mackenzie's Fourth.

D.R. Overall-Hatswell repeats his errors in uniform authenticity, but offers accurate items not seen in the previous films. Even though 1872 pattern officers' coats are seen, the enlisted uniforms still suffer.

Carry of the saber and carbine on the saddle are improper and the worst of the three films. Using authentic bits and other horse equipment help offset this discrepancy. Notwithstanding the use of a headquarters flag, other flags and guidons are also incorrect for the period. Ford effectively uses authentic tents and stoves and accurately depicts life under canvas.

Once again, Ford's forte is his depiction of army life. His cavalymen execute their mounted drill accurately even though the commands are incorrect. The bugler's performance is exemplary; every call is by the regulation. Ford's use of small customs and courtesies embellish the story. His portrayal of desertion and a commander's attitude on the subject is realistic. On the other hand, his depictions of horse-jumping and early discharge payment are too early for the times.

The director's personal touch is evident in the cast and music of the film. The folk songs and traditional ballads sung by his son-in-law add to the feel of the picture. While some of the tunes are authentic, most are contemporary.

Ford's rendering of entertainment is accurately counterbalanced by the mundane side of garrison life. He introduces the laundresses of "Suds Row" while giving another glimpse of the anxious women who wait for their men on campaign. Fort Starke's women mirror the feelings of those who waited for Mackenzie.

Rio Grande gives John Ford the opportunity to recognize his Navajos. In addition to portraying Apaches, they also portray cavalry scouts. They are brave, trustworthy, and Yorke speaks to them in their own language. The same was true for Mackenzie's Seminole-Negro scouts.

Although Yorke fights only Apaches, Mackenzie fought Kickapoos, Lipans and Apaches. Both men used similar

tactics to defeat their foes and only suffered light casualties in the process. Those casualties were safely returned by litter to their garrisons.

With the completion of Rio Grande, John Ford had defined an entirely new genre of Westerns featuring the United States Cavalry. While Kathleen Yorke had to contend with but a single rival, John Ford had none.

## CONCLUSIONS

*John Ford is not merely a man for all seasons, but an artist for all time . . . His films constitute a substantial body of sublime achievement in the cinema of our planet.<sup>1</sup>*

John Ford was undoubtedly one of the greatest film makers in the history of motion pictures. He received more Academy Awards and New York Film Critics' Awards than any other director. Five of his six Oscars came before he started Fort Apache in 1947. During the period he made the cavalry trilogy, then, Ford was at the peak of his career. Surprisingly, these films never received critical acclaim in their day; all received mixed reviews about the plot, the action, or the players. For the past forty years, none of the three have been examined for historical accuracy. Stowell asserts Ford was one of America's great chroniclers and mythmakers. This study supports his thesis and has revealed much about John Ford, his myths, and reality.

Ford knew the difference between story-telling (the stuff of myth) and capturing events in a documentary--he was an Academy Award winner in both fields. His trade, however, was story-telling, not documentaries.

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<sup>1</sup>Stowell, quotation on back cover.

The fact that he received awards for the latter testifies to his skill as a film maker in situations not of his choosing. His creation of myth through the medium of motion pictures was no more unique than, say, director Howard Hawks', but the motivations were probably different.

Ford was always receptive to new story ideas. He read books, magazines and other sources for inspiration. He would harvest these ideas and store them for future projects. Rarely was he finished with one picture before he was preparing for the next.

Ford was dogmatic about filming things the way he visualized them. He rarely took advice, and even then, grudgingly so. This obviously minimized the input of researchers, screenwriters or technical advisors, no matter how well they did their homework. In the strictest sense of the meaning, Ford became an "auteur" or film author. He controlled as much of the production as possible and successfully projected his values and ideals into his films.<sup>2</sup>

His closest associates were his friends and family. By definition, then, they shared his views and acquiesced to his desires. The rest of his acquaintances constituted either an admiration society or a hate club.

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<sup>2</sup>Stowell offers a similar assessment on pages xi and xii.

His love of the Irish and his sense of patriotism following World War II found historically acceptable homes in the cavalry trilogy. The contacts he made during his overseas service benefitted his filmmaking financially and artistically.

The motion picture industry gave the artistic Ford problems. That he could consistently produce great pictures with smaller budgets showed his versatility and his prior film training in the austere teens and twenties. He made the equally successful Rio Grande for a million dollars less than Fort Apache. Cavalry uniforms and equipment were available, but most were turn-of-the-century surplus twenty-five years too old for his films. Even though he accepted editing and music scoring as necessary evils, Ford had specific tastes in music. These tastes ran to Irish jigs, ballads and patriotic tunes that found their way into the cavalry films. In addition to enhancing the story, the majority of the music in the films authentically recreates the times.

John Ford had no qualms about creating myths. In Fort Apache, Ford embellished a legend because he felt the country needed it. References to George Armstrong Custer and the Seventh Cavalry take shape in the first film, are specifically mentioned in the second, and still alluded to by the third. The reality behind the myth did not concern Ford--the principle did. His love affair

with Monument Valley created another myth of the frontier. Striking buttes and table-top mesas came to represent the West of the imagination.

Even Ford admitted legend had some basis in fact, and he did strive for authenticity, if not credibility in his work. He took images from others, but carefully chose those he felt most believable. The visual images came from the best of America's Western artists. Most of those artists had actually experienced the frontier of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, they painted the West of the 1830s or the late 1880s and 1890s, not Ford's West of the mid-1870s. This explains much of the historical inaccuracy of uniforms, equipment and location in the three films.

Ford the artist made his cavalry epics for reasons other than entertainment. His goal in Fort Apache was to mirror frontier army life in the 1870s. He made She Wore a Yellow Ribbon to bring the art of Remington, Russell, and Schreyvogel to life while depicting the military affliction of retirement without future prospects. Finally, Rio Grande was his insurance for financial support of a more important project.

The reality in Ford's cavalry trilogy has revealed itself in the preceding chapters. In terms of the people, Ford had extensive and believable character sketches designed for Fort Apache. She Wore a Yellow

Ribbon showed no evidence of this practice; Rio Grande had only one. Historical characters in the films were the exception to the rule. The characters of Cochise and Phil Sheridan were strikingly accurate in their respective films.

Only Fort Apache leaves the viewer without question as to location. Deductive reasoning argues for Fort Laramie, Wyoming, as the second film's Fort Starke. In Rio Grande, Starke by historical definition must be Fort Clark in Texas. In all three films, Ford leads one to believe the action takes place in the Southwest. The first two films were shot outdoors in Monument Valley; the last picture was filmed near Moab, Utah.

Specific events in the first two films have no historical basis in fact. Even Rio Grande does not accurately depict all events of Mackenzie's raid. This is probably not too surprising since it has been established Ford was not filming documentaries. What supports film credibility most are other historical events that do parallel the depicted action. These other events occurred either in the same general area or during the same period of time. This realism offsets the technical inaccuracies and adds to film credibility.

Ford's treatment of the military profession and garrison life is his greatest triumph. Several themes repeat themselves throughout the trilogy. Brevets and



longevity, military decorum, desertion, and training are some of the more noteworthy. While technical inaccuracies creep into the cavalry's drill and maneuvers, Ford's buglers in all three films do an exemplary job sounding calls prescribed by regulation.

Ford offers two distinct Indian character types in Fort Apache and She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. The first type is vengeful and savage while the other is peaceful and only fights when forced to defend his people. The director is not as careful with his Indian characters as he is with his soldiers. One chief actually scouted for the army and won the Medal of Honor instead of taking the warpath; another had the right name, but the wrong tribe. Ford uses his adopted tribe, the Navajos of Monument Valley, as his extras in all three films, but only uses them as Navajos in Rio Grande.

In Fort Apache, Owen Thursday conveys the concept of Indian-fighting held by most Victorian army officers on the frontier in the 1870s. There were notable exceptions to this way of thinking, and Ford presents those in all three films. Aside from irregularities in weapons on both sides, the military engagements in the pictures are realistically rendered and generally conform to similar historical events.

As is the case with most research, this study has raised as many questions as it has answered; other areas

argue for further analysis. First, a supplementary study could include an examination of Ford's military service with the O.S.S. and his wartime experiences. Second, retired army officer James Warner Bellah was a prolific writer worthy of a dissertation in the field of American literature, not to mention film history. Third, to limit the scope of this study, the researcher chose to analyze Ford's trilogy as a single body of work. Further analysis could include examination of the cavalry in all of his films, culminating in Cheyenne Autumn. A final area for research could explore all of Ford's military films to discover how his attitude toward the profession of arms changed through the years.<sup>3</sup>

Whether John Ford filmed historical fiction or fictionalized history is certainly debatable. This writer believes a greater body of evidence supports the former. To answer the question, does John Ford present the "truth?" one must first define reality and then separate it from the verisimilitude found in motion pictures. This comparative analysis concludes that John Ford's cavalry trilogy does accurately portray the frontier army in the West of the 1870s. Without apology, John Ford printed his own cavalry legend that brooks no rival.

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<sup>3</sup>Bellah's Papers reside in the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University.

**APPENDIX A**

## APPENDIX A

### Fort Apache Filmography<sup>1</sup>

Release: 9 March 1948 (24 June, Capitol Theatre, New York City)

Studio: Argosy Pictures-RKO Radio

Director: John Ford

Producers: John Ford, Merian C. Cooper

Screenplay: Frank S. Nugent, from the short story, Massacre, by James Warner Bellah

Cinematography: Archie Stout

Art Direction: James Basevi

Set Dressings: Joseph Kish

Film Editor: Jack Murray

Musical Score: Richard Hageman

Arranger and Conductor: Lucien Cailliet

Dance Sequences: Kenny Williams

Sound: Frank Webster, Joseph I. Kane

Second Unit Director: Cliff Lyons

Production Manager: Bernard McEveety

Assistant Directors: Lowell Farrell, Jack Pennick

Properties: Jack Galconda

Technical Advisors: Maj. Philip Kieffer, USA (ret.),<sup>2</sup>  
Katherine Spaatz

Research Editor: Katherine Clifton

Costume Research: D.R.O. Hatswell

Men's Wardrobe: Michael Meyers

Ladies' Wardrobe: Ann Peck

Makeup: Emile LaVigne

Special Effects: Dave Koehler

Budget: \$2.5 million

Cost: \$2.8 million

Gross: \$4.9 million

Running Time: 127 minutes

Days of Filming: 45

### Cast

Lieutenant Colonel Owen Thursday

Henry Fonda

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<sup>1</sup>Bogdanovich, 134; Jewell and Harbin, 228; Ricci, Mark, Boris Zmijewsky, and Steve Zmijewsky, *The Films of John Wayne* (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1979), 157; Stowell, 161-62; Dan Ford, 215, 218; The appendices include information not shown in the motion picture credits.

<sup>2</sup>Kieffer's name is misspelled 'Keiffer' as an extra and in Argosy correspondence. FC, Correspondence, 14 July 1947, B.2.

Captain Kirby York  
Philadelphia Thursday  
Lieutenant Michael O'Rourke  
Sergeant Major O'Rourke  
Captain Sam Collingwood  
Sergeant Mulcahy  
Sergeant Beaufort  
Mrs. Emily Collingwood  
Mrs. O'Rourke  
Dr. Wilkens  
Silas Meacham  
Cochise  
Sergeant Shattuck  
Mrs. Gates  
Sergeant Quincannon  
Newspaperman  
Bartender  
Other Players

John Wayne  
Shirley Temple  
John Agar  
Ward Bond  
George O'Brien  
Victor McLaglen  
Pedro Armendariz  
Anna Lee  
Irene Rich  
Guy Kibbee  
Grant Withers  
Miguel Inclan  
Jack Pennick  
Mae Marsh  
Dick Foran  
Frank Ferguson  
Francis Ford<sup>3</sup>  
Ray Hyke  
Movita Castenada  
Mary Gordon  
Philip Keiffer

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<sup>3</sup>Ford's older brother.

**APPENDIX B**

## APPENDIX B

### She Wore a Yellow Ribbon Filmography<sup>1</sup>

Release: 28 July 1949  
Studio: Argosy Pictures-RKO Radio  
Director: John Ford  
Producers: John Ford, Merian C. Cooper  
Screenplay: Frank S. Nugent, Laurence Stallings from  
the short stories War Party and Big Hunt,  
by James Warner Bellah  
Director of Photography (color): Winton C. Hoch (Academy  
Award)  
Second Unit: Charles P. Boyle  
Camera Operator: Harvey Gould  
Technicolor Color Director: Natalie Kalmus  
Associate: Morgan Padelford  
Art Direction: James Basevi  
Set Director: Joe Kish  
Film Editor: Jack Murray  
Assistant Editor: Barbara Ford<sup>2</sup>  
Musical Score: Richard Hageman  
Musical Arrangements: Lucien Cailliet  
Musical Conductor: C. Bakaleinikoff  
Sound: Frank Webster, Clem Portman  
Sound Effects: Patrick Kelly  
Second Unit Director: Cliff Lyons  
Associate Producer: Lowell Farrell  
Assistant Directors: Wingate Smith, Edward O'Fearn<sup>3</sup>  
Properties: Jack Golconda<sup>4</sup>  
Technical Advisors: Maj. Philip Kieffer, USA (ret.),  
Cliff Lyons  
Costume Research: D.R.O. Hatswell  
Men's Wardrobe: Michael Meyers  
Ladies' Wardrobe: Ann Peck  
Makeup: Don Cash  
Hairdresser: Anna Malin

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<sup>1</sup>Bogdanovich, 134; Jewell and Harbin, 241; Ricci, Boris Zmijewsky, and Steve Zmijewsky, 170-2; Stowell shows the release date as 22 October (17 November 1949, Capitol Theatre, New York City); 162; Dan Ford, 228-30.

<sup>2</sup>Ford's daughter.

<sup>3</sup>O'Fearn was Ford's brother.

<sup>4</sup>This spelling varies from the credits in Fort Apache.

Special Effects: Jack Caffee  
Budget: \$1.8 million  
Cost: \$1.3 million  
Gross: \$5.2 million  
Running Time: 103 minutes  
Days to Film: 31

#### Cast

Captain Nathan Brittles  
Lieutenant Flint Cohill  
Lieutenant Ross Pennell  
Olivia Danforth  
Sergeant Quincannon  
Sergeant Tyree  
Major Mac Allshard  
Mrs. Allshard  
Dr. O'Laughlin  
Red Shirt  
Pony-That-Walks  
Karl Rynders  
Trooper Cliff  
Quayne  
Hochbauer  
Wagner  
Hench  
Trumpeter  
Jenkins  
Colonel Krumrein  
Sergeant Major  
Courier  
Officer  
Badger  
Private Smith  
Officer  
McCarthy  
Interpreter  
Other Players

John Wayne  
John Agar  
Harry Carey, Jr.  
Joanne Dru  
Victor McLaglen  
Ben Johnson  
George O'Brien  
Mildred Natwick  
Arthur Shields  
Noble Johnson  
Chief John Big Tree  
Harry Woods  
Cliff Lyons  
Tom Tyler  
Michael Dugan  
Mickey Simpson  
Fred Graham  
Frank McGrath  
Don Summers  
Fred Libby  
Jack Pennick  
Billy Jones  
Bill Gettinger  
Fred Kennedy  
Rudy Bowman  
Post Park  
Ray Hyke  
Lee Bradley  
Chief Sky Eagle  
Dan White



**APPENDIX C**

## APPENDIX C

### Rio Grande Filmography<sup>1</sup>

Release: 15 November 1950 (Mayfair Theater, New York City)<sup>2</sup>

Studio: Argosy Pictures-Republic Pictures

Director: John Ford

Producers: John Ford, Merian C. Cooper

Screenplay: James Kevin McGuinness, from the short story, Mission With No Record, by James Warner Bellah

Photography: Bert Glennon, Archie Stout (second-unit)

Art Director: Frank Hotaling

Set Directors: John McCarthy, Jr., Charles Thompson

Film Editor: Jack Murray

Assistant Editor: Barbara Ford

Musical Score: Victor Young

Songs: "My Gal is Purple" and,

"Footsore Cavalry" and,

"Yellow Stripes" . . . . . Stan Jones

"Aha, San Antone" . . . . . Dale Evans

"Cattle Call" . . . . . Tex Owens

"Erie Canal"

"I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen"

"Down By the Glen Side"

"You're in the Army Now"

Performed by the Sons of the Pioneers

Sound: Earl Crain, Sr., Howard Wilson

Second Unit Director: Cliff Lyons

Assistant Director: Wingate Smith

Properties: R. Dudley Holmes

Technical Advisor: Maj. Philip H. Kieffer, USA (ret.)

Uniforms by: D.R. Overall-Hatswell

Costume Design: Adele Palmer

Makeup Supervision: Bob Mark

Hair Stylist: Peggy Gray

Special Effects: Howard and Theodore Lydecker

Budget: \$1.2 million

Gross: \$2.9 million

Running Time: 105 minutes

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<sup>1</sup>Bogdanovich, 135-36; Ricci, Boris Zmijewsky, and Steve Zmijewsky, 177-79; Stowell, 233, 162-63; Republic Pictures Corporation Statement of Income and Costs, 22 August 1953, FC, 8.5, f.28.

<sup>2</sup>Ricci shows the release date as 2 November 1950.

## Cast

Lt Colonel Kirby Yorke  
Kathleen Yorke  
Sergeant Quincannon  
Trooper Travis Tyree  
Trooper Jefferson Yorke  
Trooper Daniel Boone  
Dr. Wilkins  
Lt General Philip H. Sheridan  
Deputy Marshal  
Captain St. Jacques  
Captain Prescott  
Margaret Mary  
Lieutenant  
Sergeant  
Heinz  
Other Players

Regimental Singers  
(Sons of the Pioneers)

John Wayne  
Maureen O'Hara  
Victor McLaglen  
Ben Johnson  
Claude Jarman, Jr.  
Harry Carey, Jr.  
Chill Wills  
J. Carroll Naish  
Grant Withers  
Peter Ortiz  
Steve Pendleton  
Karolyn Grimes  
Alberto Morin  
Stan Jones  
Fred Kennedy  
Jack Pennick  
Pat Wayne  
Chuck Roberson  
Ken Curtis<sup>3</sup>  
Hugh Farr  
Karl Farr  
Lloyd Perryman  
Shug Fisher  
Tommy Doss

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<sup>3</sup>Ford's son-in-law.

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